

#246

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The Wizards Three

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Plus

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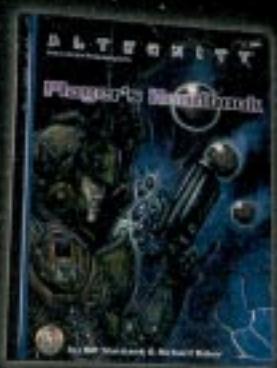
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About the Cover

In just a few years, Michael Sutfin has developed his craft to breathtaking levels. On this month's cover, he shows us a rather sinister knight and his loyal henchman.

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Love Slave of the Kobold Queen

JESSE'S LATE. Months ago, I asked him for an editorial about henchmen for this issue. If anyone understands what it means to be a henchman, I figured it would be the beleaguered department assistant.

Every now and again, I'd give him a gentle reminder. Last week I took to nagging. Today at lunch I told him that if it weren't on my desk this afternoon, I'd tell everyone about his character in Phil's campaign. Jesse thinks he has about an hour, but I'm feeling cruel. He's got about ten minutes. Time enough for me to finish this page.

Phil Athans of the TSR book department runs a FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign on Thursday nights. When it started, Jesse was one of the first to join. It had been a while since he'd been able to play AD&D® regularly, and he was keen on playing "a fighter who has a sword." He was pretty excited.

The group went on a mission to the Haunted Halls of Eveningstar. Maybe you've heard about the place. Plenty of traps. Kobolds. Stuff like that. Unfortunately for the PCs, Phil had read Roger Moore's "Tucker's Kobolds" editorial from *DRAGON® Magazine* #127.

Even then, things wouldn't have been too bad for Jesse . . . except he missed one session. Chris Perkins took over roleplaying Jesse's fighter for the night, just in time to face the most fiendish of the kobold ambushes. Pelted by their endless darts, Jesse's fighter grew frantic to discover the entrance to the kobolds' secret tunnels. At last he found the door and kicked it open, surprising the half-dozen kobolds who tried to hold it shut. He strode in, drew his long sword, and prepared for his revenge.

Then the poison kicked in.

Maybe I should insert a note about Phil at this point. Imagine a bespectacled Commander Riker after about 10 years at a desk job, except he doesn't tilt his head when he walks around corners. Give him a great sense of humor and a mean streak as a DM. You're in Phil territory, now.

Thus, one can only imagine the horrors Jesse's paralyzed fighter endured, helpless in the clutches of his enemy. The rest of the party had quite sensibly run away, so it was only after the game that anyone had a hint to Jesse's fate.

Arriving at work early the next morning, I was the first to see a colored sign posted on his cube: "Jesse Decker, Love Slave of the Kobold Queen!" Knowing that Phil was Jesse's DM, I laughed and laughed. Then I got over it . . . at least until Jesse arrived a little later. I found him snatching the sign down from the cube wall.

"It never happened! Those guys made it up!" His usual cool aplomb was gone, and his shrill denials made him sound like Bob from "Knights of the Dinner Table"—if Bob were actually to speak.

If I thought he was taking it badly then, it was only because I didn't know that Chris had posted a lot more of those signs throughout the building.

Now I wasn't at that game session, but I've sure heard enough about it to glean a few lessons from poor Jesse's mistakes:

Never miss one of Phil's games.

Never let Chris run your character.

And never, never blow a deadline for Dave.

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THE FRANKLIN MINT

Within hours of circulating issue #243 among the TSR games department, I had my first pitch for a "How To Play an 18 Wisdom" article. If all goes well, we'll see that one later this year. Now, does anyone out there have a good proposal for a "How To Play an 18 Intelligence" article?



Where are all the funny letters we can publish in April? We still occasionally receive some pretty astonishing mail, but it's not as often funny ha-ha as funny call-the-police.

While we wait for those hilarious epistles to arrive in time for the April 1999 issue, let's take a look at the regular mail, the mail that doesn't scare us. Your mail, Not those other people's mail.

Because of the blinding speed of email and the highly variable delivery time for overseas mail, we've been receiving letters of comment on about four issues at once, lately. Here's a recent sampling, including your thoughts on individual articles, the recent changes to the look of the magazine, and your favorite settings:

I don't know how many times I have played in games in which someone has played a paladin with the attitude of Archie Bunker . . .

Articles with Personality

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

I know that one of *DRAGON Magazine*'s chief goals is to publish roleplaying material that can immediately be brought to the game table. Yet, to be honest, I often find the vast amounts of new spells, magical items, and monsters rather repetitive. I also realize that this sentiment also puts me in the minority of the readership. New game add-ons are probably a top-draw for most gamers. Even so, I must say that *DRAGON* still manages,

more times than not, to feed my game-material appetite.

Case-in-point: David Brumbaugh's "He's Got Personality" article in issue #243 was a first-class treatment of the oft-neglected Charisma ability score. I don't know how many times I have played in games in which someone has played a paladin with the attitude of Archie Bunker, disregarding a 17 Charisma as just another wayward scribble on a character sheet. And how many times have we seen thieves play their fast-talking proficiency with only the roll of the dice rather than the roll of the tongue? Brumbaugh did an excellent job finding a roleplaying home for the

neglected step-daughter of proficiency scores with clear guidelines and examples. I just can't wait to hand out the article to the person playing the paladin in my current AD&D® campaign, as well as use some of the ideas on playing a high Charisma on the next NPC swindler, enchanter, or conniving merchant my players encounter.

Now, how about an article for role-playing high (and low) Wisdom?

Stephen E. Radney-MacFarland
Greeley, CO
ads01@aol.com

Honey and Vinegar

Dear *DRAGON Magazine*,

As a long time reader, I was not only moved by your plea for letters but also inspired by the recent quality of *DRAGON Magazine*. I am fortunate in that throughout the course of my job I am able to read most of the gaming magazines on the market. After a period of buying *DRAGON Magazine* only out of habit, I find myself looking forward to the latest issue.

I find that the artwork in most issues is very good. The cover for #243 was outstanding! I particularly enjoyed Mr. Daniele's use of color. The subject was, as mentioned, a natural. I also enjoyed the interior artwork from Todd Lockwood and John Stanko.

The quality and range of articles with issue #243 was also enjoyable. I enjoyed and will use in my own campaigns the articles from Lloyd Brown ("Holy Swords of the Realms"), David Brumbaugh ("He's Got Personality"), Mike Nystul ("Enchanting Weapons"), the "Arcane Lore" submission from Anthony Nixon and David Head and the "Dungeon Mastery" offering from Don Perrin. Each of these articles was well written and entertaining while being of immediate use in my games. (I run the GREYHAWK® setting and my own world.)

I also enjoyed but will likely not use Steven Berman's "Destriers of the Planes." Although entertaining, I don't find the basic premise appropriate to my campaigns. Ditto for "The Treasures of Krynn" and "Bazaar of the Bizarre." Even though I may not use the ideas or information contained in these articles, I still enjoyed reading them and encourage *DRAGON Magazine* to continue to print such items. I am sure that there are many DMs who will use them.

I only skimmed the articles by Tom Doolan and Johnathan Richards. Neither particularly interested me—"In a Class by Themselves" article was, for me, a rehash of what we've been doing for years; and the duckbunny from Mr. Richards article pretty much killed my interest there.

Yet I would not say that these were a waste of space, as so many readers seem to view those offerings not immediately pertinent to their current campaign or gaming style. Although I and my compatriots may find "In a Class by Themselves" redundant, there are many DMs who will read the article and experiment, thereby improving their games and their fun. The idea of magical crossbreeds is just the type of odd little article that I—and most others, I would guess—have as much a chance to like as not. It was certainly worth including! Viva the odd!

I am impressed with Peter Adkison's first "Out of Character," both for content and brevity. I will likely modify his suggestions for use in my own games. Let's hope that this is start of a trend.

The above was the honey. Now, the vinegar.

I noticed but was not particularly impressed with the increased use of color throughout this issue. For example, the use of color to highlight the offset comments in this month's "Forum" did not seem any more effective than setting off the excerpt with quotations. And quotations are much less likely to cause a future price increase. Lose the color, and save the money.

I also feel that "Floyd" and "Wyrm of the North" have run their course. How many dragons can there be in the North? Ye gods! However, I do realize that I am in the minority, a very small and eagerly hunted minority, on this one.

There. That's it for the vinegar.

All in all, 243 was a most enjoyable issue. A wide range of articles covering a wide range of campaign styles. Very well done. For future issues, I would like to suggest one thing—a "ProFiles" on Roger Moore.

Eric Silveira
Modesto CA

P.S. Oh! To answer Mr. Perkins' question of how many more issues you'd sell if he did the editorials—that would depend on how many close relatives he has!

This sort of specific criticism is just what we want to hear about each issue, so keep these comments coming. Or you can talk to us in real-time by visiting the TSR website (www.tsr.com) on the first Friday of each month. You'll need to visit ahead of time to download the necessary software, but then hang out and tell us what you think.



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The Politician Class?

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

Congratulations! Issue #243 is one of your best issues yet. I found virtually every article very practical. The article "In a Class by Themselves" was wonderful. I have been creating new classes constantly since I read it.

Using the new Charisma proficiencies from "He's Got Personality," I created a politician class that is sure to make my next villain memorable. I also thought that the new "Out of Character" column was great. Finally I have a decent system for giving out experience points.

I have one small complaint, however. Of all the departments I find "Arcane Lore" to be of least use in my campaign. The AD&D game must have hundreds and hundreds of spells; it doesn't need any more! If wizard PCs want unique spells, they should think of their own and research them. I'm not saying never to print "Arcane Lore"; just don't put it in every issue. This space could be better used for other things.

Avi Craimer
Calgary, Alberta

The Return of AL-QADIM®?

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I have noticed recently that the topic of restoring previous campaign

worlds has been looked at fairly favorably, yet they seem only to focus on the really old settings, such as the GREYHAWK®, DRAGONLANCE® and SPELLJAMMER® campaigns.

I am wondering, after reading many articles and seeing the 1998 product release catalog, what happened to the AL-QADIM setting?

Please tell me that this campaign setting wasn't written off much like the *Maztica* and *Horde* settings. I and over a dozen players in

my previous campaigns loved

the AL-QADIM setting. If nothing else, could we at least have a few *DRAGON® Magazine* articles?

Jason Orman
Fullerton, CA



If you take a peek at the "TSR Previews" in this issue, you'll see that the AL-QADIM setting is already enjoying a comeback in the RPGA® Network AD&D modules released this year. As I confessed in February, AL-QADIM is also my favorite setting, so I'd love to print some more AL-QADIM articles... now who'll send me an article proposal for one?

As for the chances of Maztica, the Horde, or any other "inactive" campaign setting appearing in the magazine, the answer's the same: Somebody send a good article proposal!



Send your letters of comment to "D-Mail," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA. Send your email to dmail@tsr.com. All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. Include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed, and let us know how much of that address you'd like printed. (We'll assume city and state otherwise.)

Don't Worry...

Dear DRAGON Magazine,

I must admit that with the long hiatus in 1997, I began to worry that the magazine might suffer a lot, but I am pleased to say that your latest magazines (#238-242) have proven me wrong. I loved the Ed Greenwood articles, especially the "Wizards Three" and "Wyrm of the North."

I would like to ask for more on the SPELLJAMMER campaign world. I grew to love it after reading the Cloakmaster series, and the fact that it is no longer in print makes it difficult to run a fresh campaign once the sourcebooks and most of the adventures are over.

Also, I would like to add that the "Campaign Classics" articles are wonderful. Keep up the great work!

Lucas Ashlar Lee
Malaysia

Nodwick



by Aaron Williams



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The Best Rule

I have never written to *DRAGON® Magazine* before, even though there have been many times where I wish I had. Usually I just hesitated long enough to receive the next issue, and what I would have said was said by someone else. Now that you have asked about an AD&D® 3rd Edition, I finally had something to write about.

What single rule would you most like to see changed in an AD&D 3rd-Edition game?

This is a tough question because there have been so many rules added to the system as the years have gone by. For example, are kits now standard? What about proficiencies? Or

every level means more hit points, better THAC0, more spells, more points for thieving skills, and more abilities. Each level is important at the lower levels. To give vast amounts of experience for roleplaying, advances characters too quickly when the levels mean the most.

At higher levels, even though for spell casters the levels still make a difference, the roleplaying experience that might be handed out doesn't mean as much, because it takes so much to advance.



I think the best rule is that all rules are optional.

are they still optional? I am going to answer this from a perspective of what direction I would like to see a 3rd Edition AD&D game head. I would like to see the level-based system changed to a skill-based system. The biggest reason is one of experience.

Experience in the AD&D game is based totally on combat. Monsters are the only real way for characters to gain experience in the game. Yes, there are optional rules on gaining one-shot experience for a good idea or contribution, but at higher levels they are so little they are not helpful. There are just no good ways, as the game stands, for a DM to give roleplaying experience without changing the game balance too far in the PCs' direction.

This stems from how levels work. Every level up to 9th means a lot to the character. At these lower levels,

I think this problem would be cleared up with a system that doesn't rely on levels—a more skill-based system. Suddenly, every experience point that you receive, if it "translates" into points to improve the character, means more. This also allows categories for judging and giving out experience based on roleplaying. This allows DMs to give experience based on roleplaying at all "levels" of the game, and it does not destroy game balance.

What single rule absolutely should not change in a 3rd edition game?

This question is easy to answer, but I am not sure how easy it is to implement. I think the best rule is that all rules are optional. I like the fact that, as a DM, I can rule against something that I find ruins game balance. I also like that because it allows me to choose things to fit my particular style of play.

I would like to add some caveats, if I may, to any new edition of the rules. Please, let's keep the contradictions to a minimum. I do tire of seeing a rule in the *Player's Handbook* contradicted in another supplemental book. (Level limits from *DM's Option* books to *Faiths and Avatars* is the one example I can think of off hand.) I also get sick of supplements that give great gaming information on NPCs but then tells the DM that these are too powerful for PCs to have. What is the point of telling us all of the game rules then? (*The Seven Sisters* supplement comes to mind on this one.)

As to the comments that I have seen in Forum itself, I do have one or two things to mention. Over the years of

reading *DRAGON Magazine*, I have seen many letters about how this class was too powerful, or DMs asking for help in how to deal with a PC who now has a powerful item and the DM is not sure what to do because it has made everything too easy. The answers stunned me. With few exceptions, most answers

said things like, "Just take it away, you're the DM", "... trick him into an anti-magic area . . .", "... someone could be looking for it back . . ." Although these answers are correct from a DM's perspective, I would like to suggest another approach.

Talk to the players about it. Get their advice. Bring them into the scope of the decision-making process. For many years, I had the same problems. PCs would grow so powerful that I had to boost the power of the people they fought—which meant, if they defeated them, that they became more powerful. The wonderful spiral of power. Recently, though, I found a much better solution: Ask them what I should do.

I had a group that sought and found a very powerful magical item. It made battles with anyone less than 7 HD very easy for them. Soon, they were raking in the experience points by wiping out whole tribes of kobolds, orcs, and goblins. I finally raised my hands and said, "This is not what this was intended for. What do I need to do so that your character's don't abuse items they receive?" We sat down and talked it out and the players agreed that it made things too

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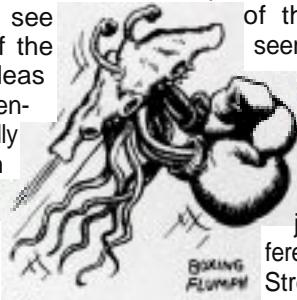
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easy. They had just been caught up in the initial fun of having such a powerful item. They agreed to use the item only in very rare cases and not make it part of their everyday arsenal. It made my life easier, and the player's characters started getting challenged by combat again.

My point is to include players in what they would like to see happen. I, too, am guilty of throwing around way too many *Mordenkainen's Disjunction* spells to rid players of their items, when asking them not to use them all of the time would have been much better. Many players would rather have the character keep something, even if they can't use it, than to lose it to a quick spell.

Don't start asking the players only when you have problems, and don't stop after that. The players are a source of wonderful ideas for any campaign. They all have ideas of what they would like to see and do in the course of the campaign, and these ideas can last for years of adventure and playing. I generally ask each player, for each new character, for a list of things they would like to do (rescue someone, kill a dragon, or see the world) and magical items they would like to find (a *holy avenger*, a defender, or a *ring of warmth*). Usually these lists surprise me, and they don't always include the extremely powerful items or the monumental tasks. I try to get the players to write a little background as well, mostly detailing why the character is adventuring with the rest of the group, which I also try to mesh into the storyline.



or two that they wanted as well—items that fit the villains and that the villains could use—rather than some random items that it makes no sense for them to have.

Yes, this is corny and a bit forced at times, but hey, isn't that what the game is all about?

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whose worshippers happen to conform exactly to old-fashioned clerics or druids.

Bards: Bards seem a little powerful to me. Sixth level spells are pretty powerful for a "dabbler." Make them suffer the same penalties for armor as regular thieves.

Thieves, Fighters, Paladins and Mages: These classes work pretty well the way they are.

Multi- and Dual-Classes: The current rules are pretty good, though a little hard to understand.

Proficiencies: The article "Back in the Saddle (Again)" in *DRAGON Magazine* #225 has an excellent proficiency system that is superior to the one in the *Player's Handbook* and the one in the *PLAYER'S OPTION™: Skills and Powers* book. I recommend it be used.

Armor Restrictions: Instead of saying certain classes can't use certain types of armor, implement these guidelines:

1) You can't cast mage spells in any armor except for elven chain.

2) Thief skills are restricted by armor as per the table in the *Thieves' Handbooks*, regardless of the class of the person using them.

3) Priests can use only armor that their gods allow.

Combat: Remove those silly wrestling tables.

Spells: Include the spheres/spells from the *Tome of Magic*. They fill in the gaps in the *Player's Handbook* spell lists nicely.

I'd also like to see the 1st edition monster experience values and treasure tables used. They made more sense to me. I can see why the monster experience values were simplified, and I propose that an average experience value be used for the convenient calculation of the experience value of 50 orcs.

I'd like to see outer planar creatures and giants returned to their 1st-edition stats. The outer planar creatures often just don't make sense the way they are now, and giants are too powerful for an average group to use very often.

Dragons: Remove the size column and add a damage column as per the old "Dragon Damage Revised" articles from way back when. A 300' long red dragon's pretty silly even in a power game.

I recommend the following *DRAGON Magazine* articles be used in the new *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book: "Wild, Wild

I think it's time to abolish exceptional Strength.

I might have written up an adventure that was very linear, with no twists and turns, and then I look to their list for side trek adventures. They are to stop the Zhentilim from selling slaves in the North, but along the way, they hear rumors of the *ring of telekinesis* that someone wanted and they go only slightly out of their way to get it before it would be gone. The slavers end up having a magical item

Specialists: Don't give the illusionists special treatment. Possibly add an extra benefit, as per in the *Wizard's Handbook*, but get a little more creative. Possibly include Elementalists and Wild Mages in the core rules.

Clerics and Druids: Annihilate them and include them only as examples of specialist priests. For those who still want to use them, it's an easy task to say that your campaign has a god

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Wilderness" (#187), "Deadlier Dinosaurs" (#187) and "Bugged About Something" (#174). All these articles make mundane creatures far more interesting.

Stuff from first edition I'd like to see re-added—Construction rules, mining rules, disease tables, insanity tables (there was a great alternative to the *DMG*'s table in *DRAGON Magazine* #138), information on campaign construction, and possibly the "Dressing Your Dungeon" tables from the *DMG*.

A few final notes; I'd like to see some kind of weather rules (possibly based on the article "Weathering the Storms" in *DRAGON Magazine* #137). I'd like to see kits removed. When Second edition was made, the acrobat, barbarian, and cavalier classes were removed either because they could be made using the proficiency system or because "birth, either high or low, does not give special abilities." Kits can be removed for the same reasons, for the most part. Otherwise they just overemphasize ability scores (good scores = better kits; good ability scores have enough benefits). Most can be emulated without a kit, or else they are just too powerful.

Books I'd like to see —*Oriental Adventures*, *Monster Mythology*, *The ENCYCLOPEDIA MAGICA™* books, *The Wizard's Spell Compendiums* and an

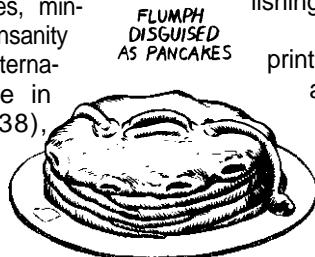
Question of the Month

What's the best way to present the Player's Handbook and DUNGEON MASTER® Guide? Should one contain most of the game information and be bigger? Should they be about the same size? Or should they be combined into one book?

The question of the Month isn't the only topic we'd like to see addressed in "Forum." Send your opinions on roleplaying games to "Forum," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, USA. Send email to dmail@wizards.com. All material should be neatly typed or handwritten. You must include your full name and mailing address if you expect your letter to be printed (we won't print a letter sent anonymously), but we'll withhold your name if you ask us to do so, and we won't print your full address unless you request it.

occasional new *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book. All of these book should stay constantly in print.

My idea for the new *MONSTROUS MANUAL* books is that instead of publishing an annual small add-on that soon goes out of print, you wait until you have a sizable amount of monsters and then print a book that stays in print constantly, like the *Monster Manual II*.
Cameron McKee
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Springfield, OR 97477



Changing What Rule?

Regarding the questions asked in issue #243, "What single rule most needs to be changed" and "What single rule most needs to be kept unchanged," I'd like to offer my comments.

First, I hope I am interpreting "single rule" correctly. No "single rule" by itself needs to be either changed or kept; I prefer to think in terms of components of the system—groups of rules that together form a sub-set of the whole. My comments are based on that perspective.

The section most in need of revision must be the proficiencies. The existing rules did not allow for the proliferation of proficiencies throughout the various products, and the inconsistent "slot cost" ratings make for very uneven values in acquiring the skills.

The section least in need of change, in my opinion, is the character class base structure. This element is central to the game's promotion of teamwork and cooperation, and its removal would rob the game of that element as well as being highly detrimental to the core identity of the AD&D game.

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Your Six Basic Races

I'm writing in response to the Question of the Month in issue #244. I believe that the 3rd edition core rules should contain only these basic six player races: human, elf, dwarf, gnome, halfling, and half-orc. This would emphasize the generic nature of the core rules, while relegating more world-specific races to other books.

I don't think that some races—duergar, drow, and aquatic elves in particular—are really appropriate. Perhaps a supplemental book called *Character Building: Fantasy Races* or something similar could be a catch-all for those and many other races, like the ones from the *Complete Book of Humanoids*. It would also be great to see traits/disadvantages *a la Skills & Powers* built into a book like this.

In a similar vein, the classes should be limited to the basic four, and extra kits/classes could be placed in a *Character Building* book. Additional weapon/nonweapon skills (style specializations, specialized nonweapon proficiencies) could help fill out this one.

Robert Hertel
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A Different Six

The player-character races that should appear in the core rules should be the same (i.e., dwarf, elf, gnome, halfling, half-elf, and of course the human). I would like to add however, that perhaps the half-orc and even the half-ogre can be added to this mix without too much of a problem. In some ways, I would like to see TSR try to work on a world with no races outside of humans. I mean most fantasy fiction relies only on humans (i.e., Conan, Fahfrd and the Grey Mouser, Elric, Wheel of Time, etc.), but people want more from a game and heck, as long as TSR keeps drow and other abominations as optional characters, I'm happy. (Back you damned Firbolgs! Back, I say!)

Joe G. Kushner
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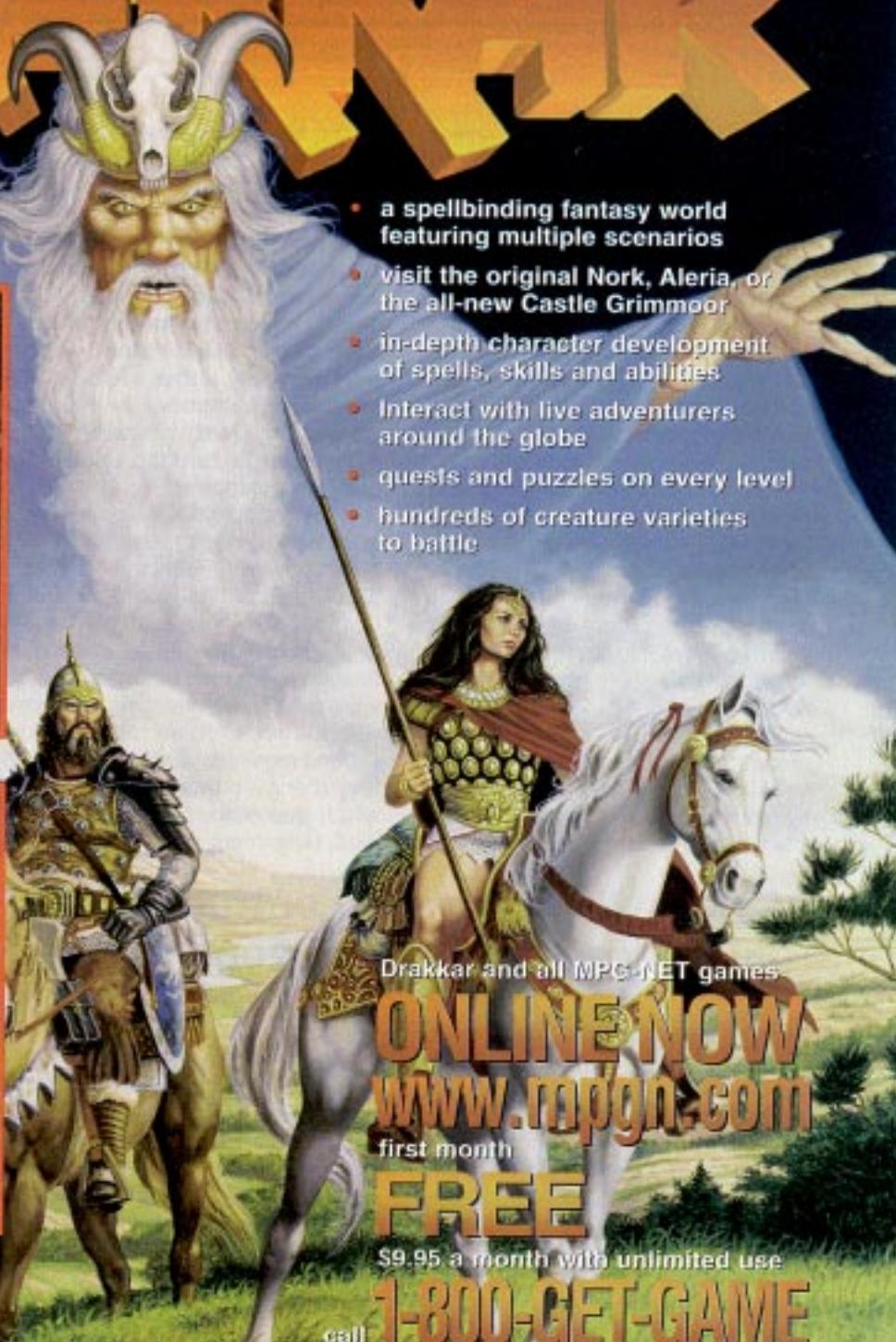
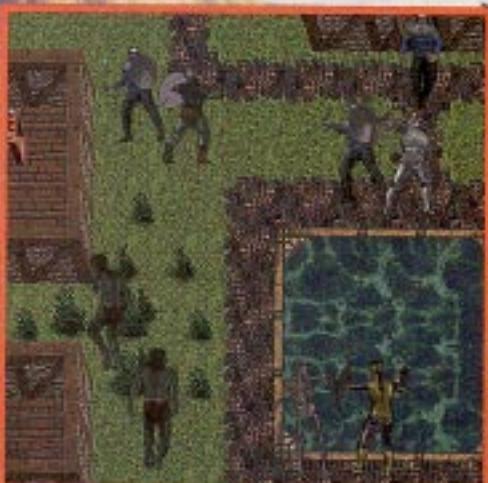


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by Skip Williams

Join the Sage this month for his annual April look at the year's most offbeat questions.

Can you throw an entire necklace of missiles? The item description specifically warns about the remaining beads exploding if one explodes, so wouldn't one bead start a chain reaction? I had a player throw the whole necklace at a charging dragon and utterly destroy it. He lost the item, but wow, pretty easy kill.

Sure, a necklace of missiles would fit neatly into almost any character's hand, and probably would sail a good 30-40' with a decent toss. Of course, to get a fireball effect from the necklace, a character must don the necklace, detach a single missile globe, and then throw the globe. (In most campaigns a command word also would be necessary.) Unless worn or carried, a necklace of missiles looks like a cheap medallion or bit of costume jewelry and has no pyrotechnic properties at all. A single character can activate and throw only

The MONSTROUS MANUAL® tome says a vampire recoils from mirrors, garlic, and lawful good holy symbols (among other things). Now, the *Faiths & Avatars* book gives Morninglords (the specialty priests of Lathander) the ability to turn undead that are directly affected by sunlight as if four levels higher, and it states that vampires normally either avoid or seek them out. Lathander is a neutral good deity. Does this mean that a morninglord's turning abilities are useless vs. vampires?

Most vampires will avoid lawful good holy symbols. Some don't. (The more powerful vampires from the RAVENLOFT® setting come to mind.) Lawful good holy symbols have a smidgen of power all by themselves, enough so that any ninny can use it to ward off a typical vampire. Characters with the power to turn undead don't depend merely on their holy symbols; they channel power from their deities, which makes their alignments irrelevant. (Alignment does affect the type

Since evil priests can control undead turn paladins, can good priests control paladins?

one missile a round. I suppose one could remove a missile globe, hand off the necklace to a really dim comrade—or perhaps to a summoned creature—and then throw the missile and hope the necklace bearer fails his saving throw. Note that even if the bearer fails to save, the necklace also must fail its item saving throw before all the remaining missiles detonate. (There is no chain reaction; it's all or nothing.)

of influence a priest has over the undead; see next question.) The effect is similar to what might happen if a peace officer (or even someone pretending to be a peace officer) waves a badge at a fleeing suspect and shouts "stop!" The badge, as a symbol of law, might induce some people to comply with the order. If, on the other hand, the officer draws a sidearm and fires a round over the suspect's head (or into

the suspect's body), it tends to make a stronger impression; tangible manifestations of power can influence even the hardheaded.

Morninglords can turn vampires at the boosted level.

Since evil priests can control undead and turn paladins, can good priests control paladins?

No, but I suspect many of them wish they could.

Can anyone at your office tell us why a thief hiding in shadows can never be seen with infravision?

A thief hiding in shadows can be seen with infravision; in fact, a thief hiding in shadows usually can be seen with normal vision. In almost every case, however, a thief can find something that will foil even infravision (a warm spot, a dim spot, a bush, or the like). The trick lies in misdirection—getting viewers to look where the thief isn't. The stage magicians Siegfried and Roy can make a caged tiger "disappear" from a stage right in front of an audience using misdirection techniques. Note that the hide in shadows ability depends on the viewer expecting to be able to see the thief; that's why it's impossible to hide in total darkness. Infravision unerringly picks up rogues trying to hide in total darkness, as does any sudden introduction of light.

If a flame tongue sword is used on a red dragon, would the sword be magical? If the sword's bonus came from its flame, then a red dragon would be immune to it, right? (It would still act as a nonmagical sword, right?) Could the same be said for a frost brand sword against a white dragon?

A magical weapon's bonuses come from its enchantment. A *flame tongue* sword gains only its minimum bonus (+1) when used against a fire-dwelling or fire-using creature such as a red dragon. (It's still a magical sword.) Likewise, a *frost brand* sword gains only its minimum bonus (+3) against a white dragon.

In the *MONSTROUS MANUAL* book most of Habitat/Society sections in the giant descriptions say something about rolling 1d4 to determine a giant's level of maturity if it isn't an adult. The text then refers the reader

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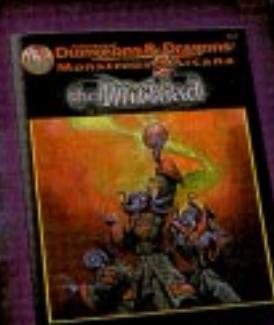
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to the statistics for some sort of lesser creature. For example, immature cloud giants are supposed to function as stone giants. If this is the case, what is the function of the “juvenile -3, -2, -1” listings in the cloud giant entry? In the section on fire giants, there a possible correction to the mistake. It says “. . . roll 1d4, a roll of 4 indicates an infant with no combat abilities and hit points of an ogre, while a roll of 1-3 indicates older progeny with hit dice, damage, and attack rolls reduced by 1, 2, or 3 respectively.” I guess this means that a “juvenile -2” fire giant has two hit dice less than an adult, has a -2

+1 weapons, it can be struck only by monsters with 4+1 hit dice or more. Would not such a creature be immune to the attacks of the *phantasmal killer* (though the creature might still be distracted by it)?

Being hit only by +1 or better magical weapons does not render a creature immune to *phantasmal killer* attacks. The *phantasmal killer* doesn’t make a physical attack at all—the assault is all within the target creature’s mind. The wording in the spell description is just an obtuse way of saying that a *phantasmal killer* effectively has a THAC0 of 17.

indoors than outdoors.) Once the dual system became history, it was a choice between tripling indoor ranges or cutting outdoor ranges by two thirds. The team chose the former.

Note that the *Combat & Tactics* rules has a melee scale and a missile scale, which restores the old dual system after a fashion. (The determining factor is visibility, not merely indoors vs. outdoors.)

The standard AD&D rules say a wizard may not use armor, period: he cannot cast spells while wearing it and gains no protection from using it. Does this mean that the best way to incapacitate a captured mage is to strap him into a suit of plate armor? If so, every mage-hunting group should stock a few spare sets of plate. A captive mage can still walk along and thus does not need to be carried or strapped to a horse, but he cannot cast any spells and is doubly humiliated by also not gaining any defensive benefit from the armor in case of an attack. If a wizard is strapped into a suit of armor, can he claim any benefit? One would think that the very nature of a suit of plate armor would turn aside some attacks. The *PHB* says a wizard can cast verbal-only spells when naked and tied up: does this carry over into wearing armor (for a mage, the next-best thing to being tied up), or is there some other element in armor use that interferes with magic?

Actually, the rules say wizards cannot use armor, but “may not” probably describes the situation better. The short answer to all these questions is that wizards in the AD&D game don’t wear armor.

The DM decides what happens when a single-classed wizard winds up clad in armor (no matter how that state of affairs came about). I suggest that all of the character’s spells still work. The wizard should gain the full defensive benefit from the armor; though you might give opponents an attack roll bonus of +2 because the wizard is effectively off balance, and sock the wizard with a +6 initiative penalty for fighting in a foreign environment. (Armor is foreign to single-classed wizards.) Also, no single-classed wizard is going to do well when wearing a hot, heavy suit of armor, so apply any or all of the following penalties (alert readers might recognize these from a previous “Sage Advice” column):

[Is] the best way to incapacitate a captured mage . . . to strap him into a suit of plate armor?

THAC0, and so on. Can this rule be applied to all the giants?

Actually, the infant, juvenile -3, juvenile -2, and juvenile -1 listings originally referred to dice penalties as follows:

Roll Penalties**

1	-1 penalty to hit points, combat, and saves.
2	-2 penalty to hit points, combat, and saves.
3	-3 penalty to hit points, combat, and saves.
4	infant, no combat ability, 4+1 hit dice.

* on 1d4

** penalties apply per die rolled (including attack rolls, hit points, damage rolls, and saving throws); no die can be reduced below 1.

This is essentially the same system featured in Chapter 2 of the *High-Level Campaigns* book. An overzealous editor decided to change the system to the “ogre, lesser giant” formula but failed to change the experience point listings or change all the giant entries to match the new format. My advice is to go ahead and use the dice penalties as the authors of the giant entries originally intended.

The description for the *phantasmal killer* spell says that the “killer” attacks as a monster with four hit dice. If a creature can be hit only by

What are the effects of *levitation* when there is no gravity?

Levitation allows the user to travel up or down. So long as a locale has an “up” and a “down,” *levitation* works normally, gravity notwithstanding. In some places, “up” and “down” is variable. When this happens, levitation might function as a crude form of flight, or it might not work at all, at the DM’s option.

Why has the range determination system been changed from the original AD&D® rules? It used to be that a given range (for spells, weapons, etc.) would be read as yards outdoors and feet indoors. Hence, under the original rules, a long bow would have a maximum range of 210 yards outdoors but only 210 feet indoors. Under the current rules, all ranges are in yards. It’s almost as if longbows have now tripled their indoor range. Please explain.

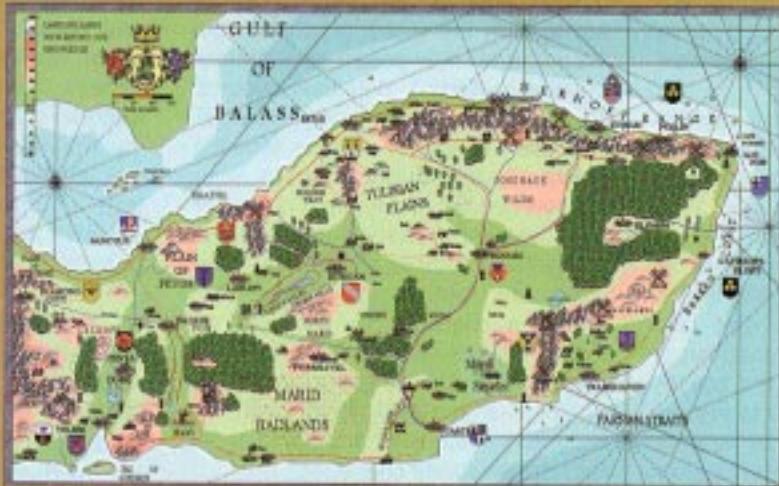
The dual-range system was wholly eliminated in the current game because it caused a great deal of confusion and didn’t seem to make much sense. A long bow has the same amount of power indoor or out. Note that movement also was measured in yards outdoors vs. feet indoors, which means that someone running down an alley was three times as fast as someone running along a hallway. (Gee, that makes a whole lot of sense, especially when you consider that athletes almost always perform better

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Encumbrance: Even if the character in question has a Strength score high enough to carry the weight, knock his movement rate down to one half. He also should make a Dexterity check every turn or fall down and go boom. It's easy to lose one's equilibrium when one is carrying an unaccustomed weight, and a wizard might easily trip over a shield. The encumbered wizard should check Dexterity every time he tries anything that even remotely requires agility: running, jumping, using stairs (in either direction), getting on a mount, and so on.

Fatigue: Single-classed wizards who wear armor or carry shields should make a Constitution check every turn (more often if its very cold or very hot). Failure indicates fatigue. The character must remove the armor and rest awhile. If the weather is bad, the character must also do something to cool off or warm up. The character passes out if denied rest.

Uncertainty: Too much reliance on physical things undermines the mental discipline the wizard needs to command his magic. There is a 25% chance that any spell he casts during the next 24 hours will fail outright. (If the caster is wearing prohibited armor at the time of casting, the spell fails 100% of the time.) Further, the character gains no experience for the adventure in which he dons armor to protect himself. If he makes a habit of wearing armor, he might even lose a level or two. The uncertainty penalty shouldn't apply to wizards who genuinely have been forced to wear armor.

Note that these penalties don't make much sense if the wizard also has warrior or priest abilities, but "Sage Advice" has suggested allowing armor to such characters several times.

A few issues ago, you said that a character subjected to a poison with

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an immediate onset time dies by the end of the round in which he has seen poisoned. I must take extreme issue with this ruling! Describe to me how a cleric can cast a *slow* or *neutralize poison* before the character has been poisoned? Basically, you're saying that you've got to count on not missing any saves when dealing with an immediate onset time, right?

What? Do you want me to change my mind about what "immediate" means? Not failing any saving throws is definitely the safest bet when dealing with an opponent equipped with venom that has an immediate onset time. Unfortunately, players have no control over saving throws (in an honest game.)

Here are several ways to save a poisoned character before she goes down: When a venomous creature appears on the scene, start casting a *neutralize* or *slow poison* spell before anyone suffers a poisoned wound. This is risky, because your character will lose the spell if nobody blows a poison saving throw. Perhaps your DM will be kind and let your character hold the spell "on hands" until needed. Many DMs I know allow something called an "option" or "delay" that allows a character to withhold an action until he sees how the round is going—at the cost of going last.

Keep a magical item such as *Keoghtom's ointment* handy, and apply it to the poisoned character.

Have someone with the herbalism and healing proficiencies standing to treat poisoned characters without delay.

Note that if your DM applies the rules strictly, the use of spells, magical items, and complex proficiencies occupies a character for a whole round, so the rescuer cannot do anything else during a round when the poison is treated.

Note also that most campaigns won't suffer a bit if the DM decides to assign longer onset times to the vast majority of creature poisons that are currently listed as "immediate."

Are golems affected by retributive strikes from *staffs of the magi* or *staffs of power*? What about other exploding magical items?

Greater and lesser golems (that is, clay, flesh, iron, and stone golems) are pretty much immune to destruction except by means specifically men-

tioned in their descriptions, and the immunity extends to retributive strikes. I recommend making an exception for *spheres of annihilation*, which obliterate just about anything they touch. I suggest allowing powerful effects such as retributive strikes, disintegration, and *Mordenkainen's disjunction* to work on "minor" golems (bone golems, doll golems, scarecrows, and other creatures listed as golems in the *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* books).

If an effect duplicates a spell included in the golem's description, it should affect the golem just as the spell does. For example, magical lightning slows iron golems and magical fire heals them. Fiery or electrical breath weapons should have similar effects on iron golems. Likewise, the roar of an androsphinx can shatter crystal and should affect a stained glass golem just as a *shatter* spell does.

Note that effects which destroy the material from which a golem is made always affect the golem. Rust monster attacks, for example, can destroy iron golems. Green slime, which destroys flesh, could dissolve a flesh or bone golem.

The Player's Handbook says paladins aren't immune to lycanthropy or mummy rot because these are "magical" diseases. Can a *dispel magic* cure these afflictions?

No. A *cure disease* effect (perhaps from a paladin's touch) cures mummy rot. A *cure disease* spell can cure lycanthropy, but only if cast by a character of at least 12th level within three days of the infection (see spell description). Otherwise, the afflicted character must receive a *remove curse* spell on one of the nights when the curse actually strikes and causes a change in form; the afflicted character still must make a successful saving throw vs. polymorph to be freed of the curse. (There is reference in the *DMG* that says *cure disease* is ineffective against lycanthropy, but this is erroneous.)



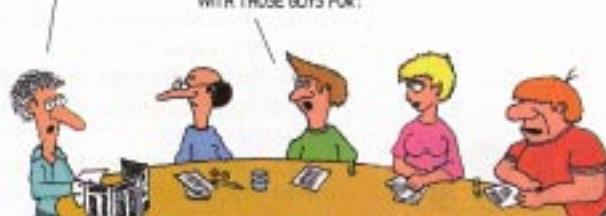
Skip Williams has never played a paladin, but he once played a druid who cast animal friendship on the paladin's warhorse. The paladin was not amused.

KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE™

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FORGET IT, DAVE! CAPTAIN SPUD BOY JUST WENT AWOL! DON'T SWEAT IT. I'LL RUN YOU THROUGH MY ADVENTURE ON SATURDAY!!

UH...OKAY.

THAT'S GREAT, B.A.! I'LL BE THERE TOO. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO PLAYING WITH OTHER PARAGON PLAYERS!!

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SATURDAY...

ALRIGHT, THE TROLL DIES HORRIBLY. THAT FINISHES OFF THE T SECTION. YOU WANNA START ON U?

(SIGH) UH...OKAY.



BEFORE YOU CAN TAKE ANOTHER STEP, YOU ARE AMBUSHED BY A FEROCIOUS UMBER HULK!! ROLL FOR INITIATIVE. MISTER MEAT SNACK!!

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Get a Life, Henchman!

by Peter Adkison

I LIKE ROLLING UP HENCHMEN for player characters. Often I can't resist giving them some interesting quirk that turns them into something more than a set of attributes or mere cannon fodder. What I've developed is a simple chart, against which I roll 1d100 for each NPC.

Roll 1d100

01-83. Nothing special.

84. The henchman is a spy or a plant from an enemy of the PCs.

85. A henchman with a shady past. This henchman has committed some crime (or has been wrongly accused of committing a crime) and is wanted by the law, probably in a different country. The henchman becomes nervous if the PC ever decides to go adventuring in that land.

Have a DM Tip?

Share your expertise as a DUNGEON MASTER by writing to: "Out of Character," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055. In Europe, write to: "Out of Character," DRAGON Magazine, TSR Ltd., 120 Church End, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, CB1 3LB, U.K.

You may also email letters directly to Peter at mavra@wizards.com.

86. The henchman is secretly in love with the PC and has signed on to put himself or herself in a position to develop a relationship.

87. The henchman falls in love with another henchman. There's a chance the relationship blooms into marriage (perhaps leading to baby henchmen!), the relationship results in a brief romance followed by a nasty breakup, or the relationship never gets off the ground. In any case, it could create some interesting tension in the ranks.

88. A rivalry develops between this henchman and another henchman. There's a 50% chance this is a healthy competition that eventually brings them closer together, but there's also a 50% chance it turns very disruptive, possibly leading to foul play.

89. The henchman is extraordinarily ambitious. He or she works very hard to advance and prove his or her worth. Other henchmen could become jealous, particularly if the PC shows favoritism.

90. The henchman lies about his or her capabilities. The henchman is only half as proficient as he or she claims to be. The PC doesn't know this, and the DM must play the henchman carefully not to let on. The henchman could be doing this to command higher pay or might simply be nervous about being accepted for employment.

91. The henchman isn't the "original" but is actually a high-quality clone or simulacrum, unknown to the PC. The henchman might or might not know this, and the original character might or might not be alive or know of the henchman's existence.

92. The henchman has a secret character class that the PC doesn't know about. Perhaps the character is not simply a fighter but is really a fighter/thief.

93. The henchman is of a very different class than the PC. Whereas the standard is for fighters to attract fighters as henchmen, who's to say there can't be an exception?

94. Henchman is fanatically loyal. This henchman has a morale of 20, never consciously betrays the PC, and never fails to execute an order to the best of his or her ability.

95. The henchman has a curse. This is most interesting if the nature and source of the curse aren't immediately obvious, and the PC must figure out why certain things happen. Ideas for a curse could be something as simple as causing water to turn stale, or the henchman could have something severe like lycanthropy.

96. The henchman has a disturbing personality quirk, like extreme arrogance, bigotry, abrasiveness, or overconfidence.

97. The henchman is very career-oriented and tries to become "second in command" and hold other positions of key responsibility. He or she becomes unmotivated if not given a chance to lead key activities.

98. The henchman is a true adventurer and occasionally leads adventures independently!

99. The henchman is of a different race than the PC. There's a 10% chance of a strange or unique race. There could be a great story behind this one.

00. DM's choice. Come up with something really over the top, like bastard son of a deity. Or re-roll.

If you have some good ideas to add to this table, send 'em to me; I'd love to add a few to this list!


Peter is a henchman of the Wizards of the Coast shareholders.

CRUSADE



And Set Slip The Dogs of War.

The clash of Magic, Faith and Science begins in Day of 1498
Scanning fiction by Storm Constantine and illustrations by the Hildebrand Brothers



1498





The Care and Feeding of Homonculi

by Lloyd Brown III

illustrated by Susan Van Camp

WIZARDS ARE LONERS BY NATURE. Whether young or old, they spend their time studying to become more powerful, learning better spells, and enchanting potent items. They rarely have time for making close friends.

Wizards, as always, have learned to compensate. Many of them keep pets. A dog or cat keeps the tower from being so empty and gives its owner years of devotion and affection. Some wizards go one step further and conjure a familiar with whom they share a special bond. Fear of harm—or even death—in the event of the familiar's death causes many wizards to reconsider this option.

A homonculus is better than a familiar in that the physical trauma inflicted on the master when the creature dies is not as terrible. The homonculus has other advantages, as well. For many wizards, the homonculus is a superior companion.

What is a Homonculus?

A homonculus, often called simply a "companion" by those who have one, is a tiny creature created by a wizard and an alchemist together. A homonculus is vaguely humanoid, with small bat-like wings, greenish scaly skin, and a mouthful of pointy teeth. It stands 18 inches tall and has a lithe, agile body. A full description appears on page 192 of the *MONSTROUS MANUAL*® tome.

The homonculus is most often employed as a spy. Its wings enable it to travel quickly and to escape dangerous situations. If one is caught, its bite can deliver a potent sleep venom that can incapacitate an enemy long enough to allow escape.

Tiny hands allow the companion to serve as a lab assistant, to clean up, or to perform miscellaneous chores around the tower. Although they cannot speak, homonculi can serve as messengers by carrying scrolls or items enchanted with *magic mouth* spells. Aside from these common uses, the tasks to which homonculi are set are as diverse as the wizards who create them.

Creating a Homonculus

Usually a homonculus is created by a wizard and alchemist working together. The wizard first provides a pint of his own blood, which the alchemist uses to form the creature's base. The donated blood must be used within six weeks, usually long enough for the procedure to be completed. The alchemist's services cost 500 gp per week for 1d4 weeks. After the alchemist has finished, the base is brought back to the wizard, who must cast certain spells on the formula within one week of finishing the base formula. *Wizard eye* establishes the bond between the creator and companion, *mirror image* creates a single image that superimposes itself over the base, giving it its roughly humanoid shape, and mending attempts to "repair" the creator's blood, which has since been replaced by natural means, resulting in the creation of an entirely new form—the homonculus.

If the creator (always the wizard who provides the blood and casts the spells, never another character who might provide help) is also an alchemist, he may perform all the steps alone. In this case, the cost is reduced by 25%. The formula for creating homonculi is not widely known, so the creator might need to find another alchemist to teach it to him.

If the creator (or novice alchemist) attempts to learn the procedure on his own, he must have the alchemy non-weapon proficiency and can discover the technique on a successful proficiency check at -4. If his research is successful, the wizard learns the formula after spending 2d4 weeks at a cost of 200 gp per week. An unsuccessful check means that, after 1d4 weeks, the would-be creator realizes that he is on the wrong path and may start over with another check.

Once this knowledge is learned, the process can be repeated as often as desired or taught to others. Once the creator (or alchemist) knows how to make a homonculus, he can research a formula for any of the different companions described later in only 1d6 weeks at the same cost as the original formula (200 gp



The Bond

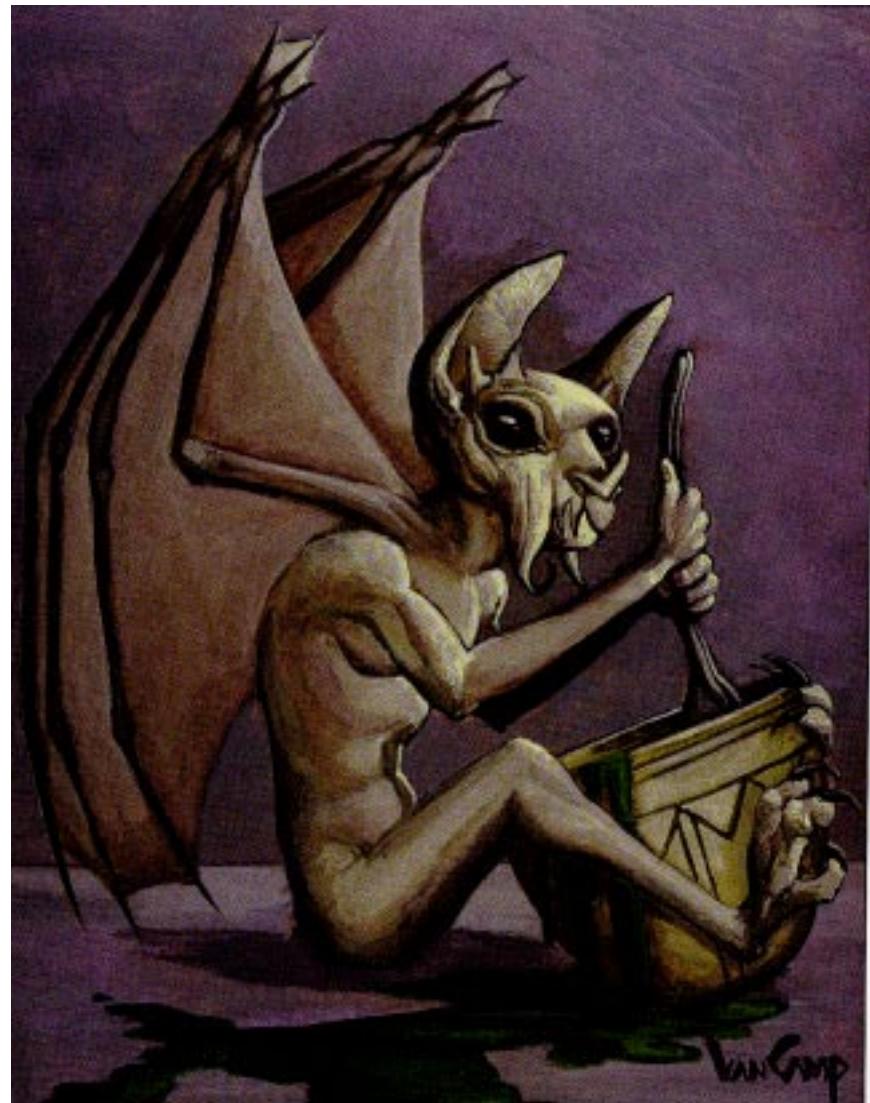
The mental link between the wizard and his companion is both the most valuable and the most dangerous aspect of having a homonculous. The link allows the creator to control and learn information from the companion. The same link is also the source of great physical and psychic trauma should the homonculous be killed.

When the homonculous is first created, both creator and companion feel or hear a slight tingling, like the almost imperceptible hum of distant machinery. A few individuals report having difficulty sleeping for the first night or two while they become accustomed to this feeling but it soon becomes natural, even welcome. For the companion, this feeling is much more intense, causing great discomfort if the hum is removed, which happens when the link is extended beyond range or when the creator and companion are separated by dimensional or planar barriers. The homonculous will do anything to have the link restored.

Most commonly, the creator and companion share this bond in a passive mode. This establishes the link that damages the creator if the homonculous is killed (and destroys the homonculous upon the creator's death), forces the homonculous to obey any orders, and gives the homonculous the Intelligence, knowledge, and saving throws of its creator.

At will, the creator can call upon the active mode of the link, which allows him to control the movement of the companion, as well as see through its eyes and hear through its ears. The companion never wishes to refuse an active link and has no power to do so, even if charmed. A creator who utilizes the active link must concentrate as if casting a spell. The creator cannot move his own body while controlling the homonculous, nor can he dodge attacks, use magical items, or perform any action not normally available to a character who is casting a spell. Any successful attack on the creator forces the link to become passive, and the creator must re-establish an active link if he wishes to use it again.

In either case—active or passive—the effects of the death of one affects the other normally. If the homonculous dies, the creator suffers 2d10 hp damage. If the DM allows this damage



The bite of the axonan causes hideous dreams.

to be reduced by any form of magic (which is not recommended), the damage should be considered necromantic in nature. The death of the wizard usually results in the immediate dissolution of the homonculous.

Multiple Homonculi

Undoubtedly, some wizard (probably a wild mage) will conclude that if one is good, two are better. Creating more than one homonculous can have disastrous effects. The first to come to mind is the danger to the creator should more than one be killed at the same time or over a brief period of time. Suffering 2d10 hp damage can hurt even high-level creators. Twice or three times as much damage can be fatal to any wizard.

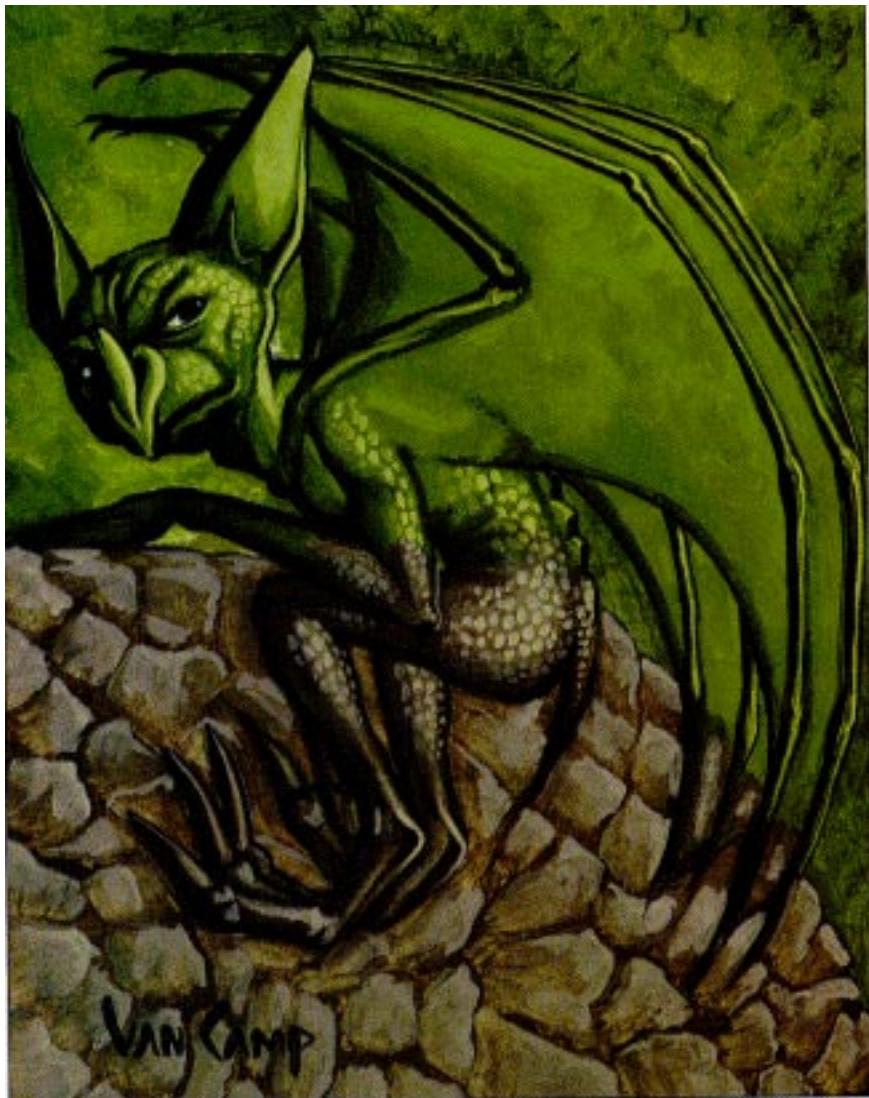
The companions themselves also feel the blow of another homonculous

linked to the same creator. In the event that one is killed, each companion linked to the creator suffers damage equal to half that suffered by the creator (1d10 hp), so it is entirely possible, if not probable, that the death of one could very well cause the death of everyone sharing the same bond.

Although some strong wizards have taken this chance, they report that the homonculi work poorly together. Each companion tries to be the center of attention. Pranks must be tolerated, fights arbitrated, and territories clearly marked if one wishes to house more than one companion.

Other Spellcasters and Homonculi

Because the homonculous link connects the life force of the creator and his companion, wizards without a



The bolan is the nearest cousin of the "standard" homonculous.

living spirit—specifically undead—are unable to create a homonculous, even if they are somehow capable of providing the blood for the creature's base. Undead might have many other special servants, including slaves of their own kind, but they may not have homonculi. The one exception to this rule is a lich who, while living, has a homonculous. The process of becoming a lich, while it technically "kills" the wizard, allows the homonculous a chance to survive. The percentage chance that the homonculous lives is equal to four times the wizard's level. Thus, the homonculous of an 18th-level wizard who undergoes the process of becoming a lich has a 72 percent chance of surviving the ordeal.

Bards and other characters who can cast the necessary spells are unable to make a homonculous. The

prevailing theory is that the ability to create and control a homonculous is a class-related ability, similar to the use of certain magical items. There have been attempts by bards and others, but these attempts invariably fail, although some few such homonculi have lived for several minutes before collapsing into a vile gel. Dual-classed and multi-classed wizards can make and use a homonculous, although dual-classed characters might suffer an experience point setback (see Dual-Classed Characters in Chapter 3 of the *Player's Handbook*).

While other creatures and character classes can use wizard spells or share some of the abilities of a wizard, the creation and use of a homonculous seems to be truly unique to them. No documented cases of non-wizards with a homonculous companion have

been discovered. No restrictions according to race, however, seem to exist. A githyanki mage, for example, is capable of having a homonculous.

Free-Willed Homonculi

The mystery of the free-willed homonculous has been debated for years. When a companion's creator dies of old age, the homonculous does not liquefy immediately but returns to the creator's body for 1d3 turns, presumably to mourn. The creature is not actually free-willed at this point, as it is still devoted to its creator. No homonculous ever seen in this state has ever acted otherwise.

If a creator is placed into any form of suspended animation but is not dead, the homonculous stays alive, as nearby as possible. These conditions include petrification and the wizard spells *feign death*, *sequester*, *temporal stasis*, and *imprisonment*. In the case of intentional use of these spells, the companion is intelligent enough to aid in the deception by staying out of sight so as not to give away the ruse (an enemy who sees a live homonculous would know that the wizard using *feign death* is not really dead).

If the creator is petrified, his end of the mental link is blocked off. From the companion's viewpoint, the effect is the same as if the creator were on another plane. The homonculous, no matter how near, feels that the link is broken and wishes it restored. It sits at the feet of the creator, rests on a shoulder, or climbs into a crook of an arm until the creator is restored to flesh.

In any case where the bond between creator and companion is severed for more than a week, the effects begin to show on the creature. Since its life force is dependent on the creator, it suffers reductions in life force when it cannot be renewed regularly. For every week the creator is on another plane or petrified, the companion must make a System Shock roll or have its maximum hit points reduced by 1d4. These hit points are restored instantly when the creator returns and the bond is restored.

Otherwise, the homonculous can take this slow ebbing of his energy for only a short while. After eight weeks, if the homonculous is still alive, the bond is permanently broken and the homonculous is free to act as it wishes. Its hit points begin to return one per day as the homonculous develops its

own life force, free from the creator's yoke. Depending on the companion's alignment and general treatment by its creator, it might attempt to restore or find the creator.

A free-willed homonculous still retains its existing knowledge and proficiencies. By preference and long association, the homonculous often seeks out a wizard, to whom it acts as an assistant and helper, although without the comforting bond. The new wizard does not gain the ability to use the homonculous' senses and does not suffer damage if it dies, but he still gains a valuable, trusted companion.

Other homonculi become thieves, join sprite tribes, explore the world, or tend crops and orchards, or anything else, according to their alignment and personality. The free-willed homonculous could even be played by the creator's player until his character has recovered from whatever unpleasant plight cancelled the bond.

Ability Scores

The homonculous is a small creature, and some of its physical abilities suffer accordingly, especially Strength. The homonculous' Strength is determined by rolling 1d3+3. Its Dexterity is excellent, however, as with many creatures its size (1d8+10). Its Constitution is rolled with 3d6, with bonuses or penalties determined normally. In cases where the homonculous cannot travel as long as the creator, it normally rests on a shoulder or saddle somewhere.

The homonculous' strong point is its Intelligence. The creature's Intelligence is equal to that of its creator, but the creature's Wisdom is often that of a child, determined randomly on 3d4 but never higher than the creator's score. Fortunately, the homonculous learns rapidly from experience.

For some reason, it seems difficult to create an aesthetically pleasing homonculous. Perhaps no alchemist so far has also possessed any artistic skill. Maybe the mix of vile components can only be refined so far. Their lack of speech keeps them from swaying others to favor with eloquence. These traits, along with a magical bond that makes their creator the most important thing in the world, give the homonculous a low Charisma rating. For these creatures, Charisma is determined on 2d4.



The wingless carian is both dexterous and curious.

Proficiencies

The companion has all of the knowledge of the creator, including proficiencies, although the Strength-based proficiencies suffer from the homonculous' weakness. Academic skills such as reading ancient history, or herbalism are more appropriate for homonculi and can be used immediately to full effect.

This duplication of proficiencies is one of the companion's main benefits for the wizard. The spy can identify cast spells or detect the presence of magic in an item if the creator has the spellcraft proficiency. If the creator can read and write, the companion can freely trade notes, minimizing the disadvantage of being mute.

Other knowledge includes general class knowledge available to the creator. The companion can recognize a

glitterdust spell, is able to gather material components, and easily fetches (small) research books from the library. Multi-classed creators might ask their companions to search a door for traps, identify a holy symbol, or judge the condition of a suit of armor, as their other class skills allow.

Tool Use

Using human-sized tools gives these small creatures a penalty to their chance of success. A -15% penalty should apply to any chance of success or a -3 proficiency check per size difference. Since homonculi are Tiny, using human tools gives them a -6 penalty on whatever task they are attempting.

If capable of performing the task, certain jobs take longer to complete. An 18"-tall person laying bricks, for



The chorasmian has eyesight three times keener than that of a human being.

example, takes a very long time to make a house. If the task is dependent on Dexterity but size helps expedite the chore, time needed should be doubled. If the task requires strength and stamina, the time needed should be trebled or quadrupled.

On the other hand, especially fine sewing work, writing, or engraving might be performed better by a homonculus than by a human. Companions engaged in these tasks might use the appropriate proficiency even more skillfully than their creator, possibly using their skill at +1 or +2.

Other Skills

Where necessary, the DM should use its creator's standard for miscellaneous abilities that a homonculus might call upon. Its chance to climb walls, for example should be 40%, the

same as an untrained human. Its chance to hear noise, surprise, and find secret doors, should all be the same as the creator's. Some specific variations have bonuses or penalties to these abilities, and these exceptions are clearly noted.

Care of a Companion

Although the *Monstrous Manual* book states that homonculi perch wherever they can, this treatment is not seemly for a creature of such intelligence. The homonculus has the same tastes as the creator, including standards of living. A creator's treatment of its companion is a matter of self respect. Instead of treating a homonculus as a pet, the creator should treat it as it is: a companion.

While an evil or uncaring creator might order the homonculus to sleep

on the floor and give it no space to call its own, even the most insensitive of creators generally give the companion its own place to sleep. At the bare minimum, a comfortable bed and shelter are required. A generous creator gives his companion its own room, complete with scaled-down furniture, some toys or games, and a private door.

A separate housing of some sort serves another purpose as well. While a spot on the floor might be protected somehow, the wizard can easily cast *wizard lock* on the companion's 2'-high door, *fire trap* the secret door that allows for easy exit, and place a *permanent illusion* (about which the companion naturally knows) over the whole thing. Keeping the companion safe from any harm also protects the wizard.

Similarly, throwing scraps to a dog is one matter, but giving leftovers to a companion who shares your deepest secrets is demeaning, to say the least. The homonculus should have its own food prepared for it, which is simply a matter of preparing slightly more than the creator himself normally eats. The companion needs only a small amount of food; a couple of coppers a day should make the difference in price, and the extra time consumed is negligible.

Clothing is another matter of which some wizards are indifferent. Since the companion is a creation, many argue that clothing is unnecessary. The homonculus, the argument goes, is just a tool, and nobody bothers to clothe a hammer or a pick.

Again, the companion's high Intelligence and similarities to its creator should be considered. The homonculus might very well make its own clothes out of materials at hand if none are offered. Rather than let it walk around in a pair of sewn leaves or a giant ratskin cloak, the creator should make some attempt to provide suitable clothing. PC homonculus owners can become quite creative if they wish, making tiny outfits that mimic their own clothing. They might also dress the homonculus up in a jester's suit, deck him out to mock a buffoonish noble, or put him in clothes that look like an enemy's garb to deceive a third party. Care should be taken that any clothes allow for the creature's wings and don't impair movement.

The companion should also be allowed reasonable time for rest and sleep. Since it can't use magic of its own, the homonculous could be allowed to sleep in during the mornings, when wizards generally memorize their spells. Also, when traveling, the homonculous might need to fly occasionally to keep up with the rest of the party, since their walking movement rate is less than a human's. Rest breaks should be planned, or the homonculous should be allowed to ride a pack animal or sit with a mounted character. Most can even sit on someone's shoulder.

Familiar vs. Homonculous

Debates rage about the relative merits of familiars and homonculi. While a wizard may have both, few actually do. In combat, the homonculous is undoubtedly superior. Although hit points and armor class are comparable for most levels, the companion's sleep venom can affect enemies of any level and for a substantial amount of time.

Defensively, the homonculous always gains the creator's saving throws; the familiar receives this benefit only when in direct contact. Although the cost of losing a homonculous might be as little as 2 hp (which can be healed easily), losing a familiar always costs a point of Constitution, which is extremely difficult to replace—and no wizard has Constitution to spare.

At the other extreme, the loss of a homonculous can cost the creator 20 hp, which is admittedly high, but wizards 8th level or higher are likely to have that much when at full health. Statistically, wizards as low as 4th level could survive maximum damage if they have a bonus to hit points for high constitution, are dual-classed or multiclassed, or have their hit points enhanced through priestly magic (like an *aid* spell). The death of a familiar can kill a wizard, regardless of level, hit points, or protection.

The familiar can be slightly more effective at covert observation of enemies, because it looks like a normal animal and might be ignored. The homonculous, on the other hand, with the creator's Intelligence makes far better deductions about what it sees and hears. The familiar's ability to relay information to the wizard is also seriously inferior to that of a



A water breathing spell gives the gendrasian both gills and a love of swimming.

homonculous, lessening its overall usefulness as a spy.

Those who prefer familiars point out that control range is a mile, while the homonculous can only be controlled up to 480 yards, or about a quarter of a mile. Advocates of homonculi point out that at anything over about 200 yards, the companion is out of an adventuring party's protective umbrella of missile fire and spells anyway. Underground or indoors, the companion is rarely more than a few yards away from the creator.

While the wizards themselves might argue bitterly about which is better, those who both create a homonculous and conjure a familiar sometimes find that the homonculous does not regard the familiar with any animosity at all. In fact, it often takes on the responsibility of taking care of

the familiar, adopting it as its own pet. A wizard's companion, moreover, is likely to be the only person other than the wizard himself who can gain the complete trust of the familiar. As for each other, the familiar knows instinctively and the homonculous knows through reason that the death of either one can kill the wizard on whom they are both dependent.

The Other Homonculi

In addition to the standard homonculous, different varieties have been created by wizards who experimented with nonstandard alchemical bases. These changes in materials may include teeth or bones from the creator (which, ideally, are regenerated with magic), the blood of other creatures, or rare and dangerous acids and poisons. A slight addition or variation to the

New Spell: Chameleon

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 2 rounds/level

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Creature touched

Saving Throw: None

This spell alters the coloration of the recipient to match that of the surrounding background. When moving through areas where the background changes gradually (such as stepping from the edge of a forest to a green field), the coloration changes automatically. When the background changes abruptly (from forest to gray stone wall), one round is required to effect the change in coloration. The coloration allows the character to blend in with his surroundings, making him difficult to spot and attack. At ranges greater than 100 yards, the affected character cannot be spotted (although he can be seen if pointed out by another standing closer). At closer ranges, the character is treated as if he had a 20% chance to hide in shadows, although he is not required to remain still. In addition, characters who can hide in shadows gain a bonus of 20% to their normal chance of success if they remain still. Missile weapons suffer a -4 penalty on their chances to hit a character affected by a chameleon spell.

The material component for this spell is the shed skin of a small lizard.

standard spell requirements is also necessary, usually something as subtle as the addition of a single spell. Neither of these elements works without the other—alchemy and magic are both required.

Most of the skills of the different homonculi seem to come at the expense of the potent sleep venom possessed by the common version. These variations have other abilities, however, which make them just as useful. Although each individual has the major personality traits of their creator, a homonculus has its own quirks and tendencies. While they can certainly be commanded to act differently, their natural behavior sometimes manifests on embarrassing or untimely occasions.

Axonan

The axonan arose thanks to the spell *ESP*. Their skin is smooth, unscaled, and can appear mauve, ecru, or milky white. Their eyes are flat and black, their heads round, and their mouths set low on their skulls. The loose skin on either side of the mouth segues into a fold that looks like a short tentacle, making their appearance nearly as bizarre as the mervan. Their wings are eerily silent and fold nearly perfectly into their back.

Combat: The venom of the axonan causes sleep but for a much shorter duration than normal—only 1d6 rounds. While the target is asleep, however, it is subjected to horrifying dreams that have been likened to the attack of a *phantasmal killer* or *nightmare* spell. Anyone bitten awakens instantly when the sleep is fought off but believes himself wounded of 25% of his maximum hit points from the imaginary ordeal. If the enemy is wounded for real (either before or after the bite venom takes effect) and believes himself reduced to 0 hit points (and actually has hit points remaining), he falls unconscious for a full hour. After one hour has passed, the victim has had a chance to review the dream sequence mentally and realize its nature, thereby “recovering” the lost hit points.

Personality: The axonan shares the closest mental link with its creator. For short periods of time (1d6 turns) it is willing to move beyond the normal range of telepathy, extending the link with which it and its creator can communicate. It does not (or can not) go beyond telepathic range more than once per day. During this period of time, should the homonculus be killed, the creator takes an additional 1d6 hp damage because he is more closely attuned to the axonan. Conversely, the axonan seems to be the least unnerved by having its link severed. Although it follows the same habits as other homonculi in seeking to restore the link, its behavior is much less frantic and desperate.

Bolan

The most common of the variant companion is made by including the spell *chameleon* (from the *Oriental Adventures* rules, see sidebar) to the basic formula. PCs who wish to use

this formula must research it or physically search for a copy of the spell. This close cousin to the standard homonculus is naturally a light brown in color but can camouflage itself almost perfectly in any natural surroundings, whether forest, desert, or underground. The bolan is otherwise similar in appearance and abilities to those described in the *Monstrous Manual* tome.

Combat: When concealed, they have a 7 in 10 chance of surprising opponents and are themselves surprised only on a 1. Their sense of sight is normal for those of its kind, but their hearing is exceptional. Bolans have a 75% chance to hear noises others would miss. When possible, they initiate combat by surprise, using their camouflage cleverly. Like most ambushers, they do not remain in close contact with an enemy. The Bolans’ sleep bite venom is weaker than normal, causing the victim to be slowed for normal duration (5d6 rounds).

Personality: With the ability to eavesdrop unseen, bolans make superb spies. They have been called the most playful of the homonculi and have a child-like affinity for simple games, especially physical games. Hide-and-seek, of course, is their favorite.

Carian

A simple *spider climb* added to the formula created a companion that turned out to be one of the most versatile. Carians lack the wings of other homonculi but sport a prehensile tail almost as long as their body, which is about one third smaller than others of its kind. They are unable to fly but compensate by being nearly perfect climbers—they have a 95% chance to climb walls. Should they fail this roll (possibly due to penalties caused by high winds, slippery surfaces, etc.), they suffer only half damage from any fall due to their light build and supple body. They can also jump up to 15 feet forward, or half that upward or backward—truly tremendous jumps, considering their own size. The carians are more agile than any other companion. They determine Dexterity by rolling 1d4+14. Their Strength scores, however, are rolled with 1d3+1, and their Wisdom suffers a -1 penalty.

Combat: Carians alone of the many known variations maintain the

normal bite attack. In combat, they jump or climb to a vantage point, then wait to pounce when a victim's back is turned. They bite once, then scamper away for another surprise attack on a different enemy. When fighting single creatures smaller than themselves, they sometimes attempt to hold on with both hands and tail, then make repeated bite attacks with a bonus (+1 to +3, one bonus point per limb grasping).

Honest wizards usually use the carian's small size and natural dexterity, as well as the added limb, to acquire hard to reach material components or as an aid in the laboratory. Larcenous wizards put them to use pilfering unwatched items, which they do very well. They are light-fingered and can pick pockets with a 50% chance of success.

Personality: The carian is the most eager to investigate new things and often has to be called back lest it set off a trap when a treasure chest or new area is discovered. They like to handle new tools and have been known to discover secret doors by triggering them inadvertently. They do not like to be around dead bodies. Crypts, catacombs, and graveyards make them nervous and irritable. If their creator allows it, they avoid these places no matter what interesting things might lie inside.

Chorasmian

Adding *feather fall* to the recipe creates a pinioned homonculous of different colors. By far the brightest hued of the homonculi, they are often red, orange, blue, green, or even the rare yellow. Their eyesight is superior, and they can see and identify objects at three times the distance of a human (see Chapter 13 in the *Player's Handbook*). They have a thick, sharp beak, thin but strong hands, spindly legs, and quick, jerky movements. Chorasmians often hop rather than walk, and they spend more time in the air than any other homonculi. Their Constitution score suffers a -1 penalty, but their brilliant coloring and affection give them a +1 bonus to their Charisma score.

Combat: Chorasmians can dive any distance and suddenly break their fall, but their hands are not sharp enough to serve as claws or talons. Instead, they usually attempt to grab an item out of an enemy's hands. If



Mervans prefer a vegetarian diet but eat meat when necessary.

they surprise an opponent, they can snatch a small item (10 pounds or less) out of an enemy's grasp if the target fails a save vs. petrification. They attempt to gain this surprise by flying out of sight above their enemy, then diving and snatching in a single round. If they can dive, they surprise as an invisible and silent monster (+4). If they do not achieve surprise, the grab is treated as an opposed roll, which the chorasmian usually fails. Often, they drop the item in a body of water or a chasm or take it to their creator. Chorasmians' venom quickly attacks the part of the victim's brain which controls the senses, causing both deafness and blindness for 5d6 rounds (the target may save vs. each effect separately).

Personality: Chorasmians have an affinity for shiny objects and might

take off with unclaimed coins or flashy crystals. They sullenly return items that do not belong to them and return other, possibly unnoticed, items after a few days. They love clean mirrors especially and treasure these fragile items far more than their gold piece value. They shy away from fire and become agitated around larger blazes.

Gendrasian

The only gilled companion, the gendrasian, can breathe water or air with equal ease. Fittingly, a *water breathing* spell is needed for its creation. They have a shiny green skin with blue, white, or gold flecks. Both hands and feet are webbed. Although scaly like most of the others, their scales are very fine and perfectly smooth. They can swim at a movement rate of 9



The largest of the homonculi, the mullan can be a bully among creatures its size.

and can swim up to 100 feet below the surface and back with ease. Gendrasian can travel deeper but no better than a human. Gendrasian prefer fresh water but can survive salt water just as well. Their ability to move in another medium gives the creator a considerable advantage, as underwater streams, stagnant pools and wide rivers often contain unknown perils or hidden treasures.

Combat: The gendrasian's bite panics targets, causing fear for 5d6 rounds, but the bite causes only 1d2 hp damage because they have a smaller-than-average mouth. Otherwise, they fight normally, although they prefer underwater combat when facing creatures foreign to that element.

Personality: The gendrasian are not only capable of swimming, they truly enjoy it. Whenever they have no

other duties or contrary commands, they prefer to find a pond or pool to splash in. If otters or dolphins are known to be nearby, gendrasian seek them out for play. Although they suffer no ill effects from having been out of water, dry skin is uncomfortable for them. They often have to be pulled from cisterns or wells that humans use as a drinking source.

Mervan

The mervan is the most unique in appearance of any homonculous and requires a summon swarm spell during creation. They are most often white, but can be tan, steel gray, or even ochre. These companions have large, multi-faceted eyes, a hard carapace (AC 5) and thin, transparent wings. The mervan's three-fingered hands are quite similar to the claws of a

trilateral creature like a xorn but no less dextrous than others of its kind.

Combat: Mervans have a weak mouth but bite with a strong pair of mandibles, dribbling their venom on their target. The venom from this bite is a real poison that causes 1d6 hp damage (or none if a saving throw is made). This poison is separate from the bite damage itself, of course. This poison loses its potency quickly and cannot be used to coat weapons or poison food or drink. Their odd eyes can detect invisible or hidden objects 25% of the time.

Personality: Mervans are undoubtedly the least curious of their kind. They have an unnerving ability to sit still for hours on end. Their only habit that eases the alien personality they project is their vegetarian diet. They have been known to eat meat, and can survive on it, but given their preference, they leave it alone. Strangers seem to expect to see mervans sucking blood out of a helpless victim and are often visibly relieved to see the homonculous nibbling on an apple instead. Mervans have a Charisma of only 1d4+1, but they are stronger than most. They receive a Strength bonus of +2.

Mullan

This oversized creation was the surprising result of an enlarge spell added to the mix. The mullan is much larger than other companions, topping two feet, nearly as large as a small halfling. The skin, scaly like the standard homonculous, is rough and darker than normal.

Combat: The mullan's bite venom is too weak to inflict damage, but their fierce bite causes 1d4 hp damage and follows two effective claw attacks (for 1d2 hp damage each). They are immensely strong compared to their peers, which means they can use size S weapons without penalty. Whether using natural attacks or weapons, they have the THAC0 of a 4 HD monster (17). If armed with a magical dagger or other weapon, they can be (relatively) fearsome. Mullans are tough, having no fewer than 3 hp per die. Although less graceful than some in the air (movement reduced to 15, MC reduced to C), they are just as adept on the ground or a perch. As mentioned, mullans are stronger than other homonculi, having a Strength score of 1d6+8.

Personality: The mullan's ability to inflict measurable damage makes it ideal for seeking out other homonculi, familiars, gremlins, or sha'irs' gens for combat. The mullan might also be used to drive away certain fairy creatures if the creator is the subject of pranks and lacks a sense of humor. Mullans are terrors among the smaller creatures because of their aggressive personality. If left unchecked by their creator, they bully smaller animals and creatures. They seem to be especially brutal to homonculi who possess a bite venom. Jealousy is the suspected reason for this treatment. They are still not very strong for personal protection and are used sparingly as a guard by a wise wizard.

Thymban

Using a *chill touch* creates a homonculous known as a thymban. The thymban appears almost skeletally thin, with taut, ashen grey skin. The head seems out of proportion to the rest of the body, and the outline of a skull can be readily seen, surrounding two bulbous eyes. The thymban brings to mind the undead and often frightens those who first view it.

Combat: Their bite venom causes fever, sweating, and weakness. Those bitten suffer -1 to attacks and damage in monsters, or -1 to Strength (for characters) per bite. If potential damage or Strength is reduced to 0, the target falls unconscious for 1d6 turns. The thymban have the unique ability to use magical items as a wizard, although they cannot utter command words if that option is used, nor can they use scrolls or any other items that rely on the spoken word. They might, for example, spy on the creator's enemies in a *crystal ball*, or use one of the different devices meant to summon and control elementals. This ability to use magic includes any protective gear normally reserved for wizards, which is useful for keeping the homonculous (and thus its creator!) safe from harm. They can often find these items with their sensitive touch, which allows them to detect the presence of magic 25% of the time in an object if they can handle it for one full turn.

Personality: The thymban, despite the poor reactions of those it meets, tends to be gregarious and often seeks to be in the company of others, as long as it can stay within telepathic



Despite its frightening appearance, the thymban is a gregarious creature.

range of its creator. If not commanded otherwise, it usually seeks out the largest group of individuals of similar alignment to its creator and follows their conversation or tries to participate in whatever activities they might be undertaking.

Further Research

Rumors abound about other homonculi, some more successful, some less. A handful of these were predisposed to an evil nature and proved reluctant to follow commands. Some are short-lived and might have failed because of alchemical rather than magical or natural reasons. Tales tell of a vampiric example that drained a person's Intelligence, a charming and beautiful homonculous, a companion with a shape similar to the hybrid form of a werewolf that

sported a fearsome bite attack, and a protean variation that did not lend itself well to description. Subsequent investigation into these homonculi by very competent wizards has been unable to duplicate these versions.

This article has seen more incarnations than a Piers Anthony series. Heather deserves much credit and thanks for her help, Dan's suggestion provided the title, and Carol allowed me the time away from chores. Lloyd had the easy job of putting it together into more-or-less coherent words.

ALTERNITY®

Science Fiction Roleplaying Game Solo Adventure Hero Sheet

Jonar Kage

Profession: Combat Spec **Career:** Concord marine

ABILITY	Score	Untrained	Res.	Mod.
Strength	13	6	+2	steps
Dexterity	11	5	+1	step
Constitution	10	5		
Intelligence	9	4	0	
Will	9	4	0	
Personality	8	4		

ACTION CHECK SCORE **Actions per round: 2**
Marginal 14+ Ordinary 13 Good 6 Amazing 3

DURABILITY

Stun 10



Wound 10

Mortal 5

SKILLS	RANK	SCORE
STR		
<i>Athletics</i>		13/6/3
<i>Climb</i>	1	14/7/3
<i>Throw</i>	1	14/7/3
<i>Unarmed Attack</i>		13/6/3
<i>Brawl</i>	2	15/7/3
DEX		
<i>Modern Ranged Weapons</i>		11/5/2
<i>Pistol</i>	2	13/6/3
<i>Rifle</i>	1	12/6/3
CON		
<i>Stamina</i>		10/5/2
<i>Endurance</i>	1	11/5/2
INT		
<i>Knowledge</i>		9/4/2
<i>Computer operation</i>	2	11/5/2
WIL		
<i>Awareness</i>		9/4/2
<i>Intuition</i>	1	10/5/2
PER		
<i>Interaction</i>		8/4/2
<i>Intimidate</i>	1	9/4/2

WEAPONS

Damage **Type**
11mm charge pistol d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m HI
pulse grenade (2) d4+2s/d6+2s/d8+2s En

ARMOR

Battle vest d6-3 [LI]. d6-2 [HI]. d4-2 [En]

GEAR

Memory harness with AI program, flashlight,
extra ammo clip

The OMEGA Variant

A STAR*DRIVE™ Solo Adventure

by Bill Slavicsek

illustrated by Phil Robb

THE OMEGA VARIANT introduces you to the ALTERNITY® game and to the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting—the first campaign setting developed especially for the ALTERNITY Science Fiction Roleplaying Game. The ALTERNITY game provides all the rules you need to roleplay any kind of science fiction milieu, while the STAR*DRIVE setting focuses on hard-edged space opera at the dawn of the 26th century.

What Do You Need?

For this solo adventure, all you need to provide is a pencil and some dice. You'll want to keep the hero sheet (featuring Jonar Kage, a Concord marine) handy throughout play, as you'll often be directed to refer to it as the adventure unfolds. As for the adventure itself, just play through it in the order the story directs, and you'll learn the game mechanics as you need them.

The ALTERNITY game uses the following dice: d20, d12, d8, d6, and d4. The d20 is called the “control die.” You always roll a control die whenever dice rolls are required. The other dice are “situation dice.” These are either added to or subtracted from the d20, depending on whether the situation is in the hero's favor.

The Game Mechanic

Using the dice mentioned above, the basic ALTERNITY game rule is relatively simple. Roll a number that's equal to or less than your target score to perform an action successfully. Target scores include ability scores, skill scores, and action check scores. If you roll higher than the target score, your hero fails. In all cases, you want as low a result as possible—the lower the roll, the better the chance that your hero succeeds at what he or she is trying to do.

How do you read the results? You'll notice that the scores listed on the hero sheet are divided into three sections. These sections represent three possible results: *Ordinary*, *Good*, and *Amazing*. Rolling this score or lower is an *Ordinary* success; one-half the score or lower is a *Good* success; and one-quarter the score or lower is an *Amazing* success. Any roll

that generates a number greater than the score is a *Failure* (or, in the case of an action check, a *Marginal* success).



Jonar Kage, for example, has an action check score of 13. If you roll a 14 or greater, that's a Marginal success. A roll of 13-7 is an Ordinary success; 6-4 is a Good success; and 3 or less is an Amazing success.

That's it! We'll explain other uses of the game mechanic as the adventure goes along.

Voices in the Dark

"Jonar? Jonar Kage? Wake up, partner! I've let you sleep way too long as it is, and now we've got company. So, forgive me, Jonar, but . . . WAKE UP!"

The insistent voice, at first nothing more than a whisper, shouts directly into your right ear, bringing you back from the depths of unconsciousness. You recognize the voice, and the urgency that punctuates each word sends adrenaline coursing through your body.

"Diana?" you ask but you can barely hear your own voice as it grates over your raw throat. Diana speaks again, and you reach up to find a comm jack in your ear. The sexy, familiar voice spills out of the unit for you alone to hear. You listen and try to clear your jumbled thoughts.

"Quiet, partner! They might hear you! There're two of them, about 10 meters away. They've got weapons, but I can't determine the make or model with this limited sensor package. It's time to call on that Concord training and do what you do best . . ."

"Concord?" you ask in the lowest whisper you can manage, "What are you . . .?" But Diana doesn't let you finish. She's always been pushy that way. Actually, most artificial intelligence programs (AIs for short) are overly full of themselves. Funny how you remember that while the rest of your memories are scrambled.

"Shhh! Don't you remember that . . . no, of course you don't. Your synapses are all short-circuited! Oh, Jonar, I'm sorry, but we don't have time to wait for you to recover from the pulse accelerators. You're a Concord marine. Take out the enemy! That's an order!"

Concord marines . . . the best soldiers in the galaxy... protecting the Verge and all of human space from any and all threats. Hurrah, hurrah! You quickly check your equipment.

You're wearing a protective battle vest over a jumpsuit. The AI memory harness is built into the jumpsuit, with the program module in a secure case on your belt. Also attached to your belt are an 11mm charge pistol and two grenades. Pulse grenades,

you think, capable of discharging bursts of electromagnetic energy. The bursts can stun unprotected humans, but they really wreak havoc on high-tech gadgets and computers.

You take in your surroundings with a glance. You're inside some kind of cargo bay or storage facility; high ceilings, reinforced walls and floor, storage containers of all shapes and sizes, no windows. You try to remember whether you're on a ship or a planet, but the memory eludes you.

There's the enemy! There are two of them, in security uniforms, carrying rifles and adorned with the Qaliban corporate logo. That logo sends shivers up your spine, but you shrug off the feeling. Time enough for remembering later. Now it's time to go to work.

Make an Action Check

In the ALTERNITY game, action rounds are divided into four phases. Each phase lasts about three seconds, or as long as it takes for a character to complete a single action. The phases, in order, are the Amazing, Good, Ordinary, and Marginal phases. A character can act in as many phases as he or she has actions per roll depending on the result of an action check.

Jonar, for example, has two actions per round and an action check score of 13. If you achieve a Marginal success, he can act only once, in the Marginal phase. If you achieve an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing success, you can choose which two phases Jonar will act in, starting with the phase that matches the degree of success.

The security guard in the Ordinary phase of each round, and each can perform one action.

Using just a d20, make an action check now.

- If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to 1.
- If you achieve an Ordinary success, go to 2.
- If you achieve a Marginal success, go to 3.



Combat and Damage

Secondary Damage: For every 2 points of mortal damage Jonar inflicts against an enemy, he also inflicts 1 point of wound and 1 point of stun damage. For every 2 points of wound damage, he also inflicts 1 point of stun damage.

Results of Damage: For each point of damage inflicted, mark off one point of durability from a character (stun, wound, or mortal, depending on the kind of damage the attack inflicts). If all of a character's stuns or wounds are marked off, that character falls unconscious. If all of a character's mortal points are marked off, that character dies.

Recovery: Stun damage is fleeting; any stun damage a character receives disappears at the end of the scene. Wound damage remains until healed with rest or medical attention. Mortal damage, the most serious form of damage, requires the use of Medical Science-surgery and extensive medical attention.

Armor: Some characters, like Jonar Kage, have armor. After a successful attack against Jonar, roll to see whether his armor protects him. For example, against the security guards' charge rifles, Jonar's armor offers d6-2 points of protection. Any result of 0 or less means that the armor didn't stop any damage. Any positive result is subtracted from the amount of damage inflicted.

1

You leap out of hiding, getting the drop on the two security guards. You're beginning to put your memories back in order, and you know that you were sent here to uncover the Qaliban Corporation's latest dirty secret. The security of the Galactic Concord is at stake, so you don't feel that you have to pull any punches. Of course, that's just too bad for the corporate goons.

They move as though they're in slow motion. You draw your charge pistol and target the guard on the left. Then you swing the weapon toward the second guard before either of them can react.

Make a Skill Check

Jonar acts before the guards, thanks to the result of his action check, using both of his actions for the round

The Guards Attack

If the guards are still able, they each can make one attack against Jonar. Jonar has light cover, so the guards roll d20 and "d0," due to Jonar's resistance modifier. They both have skill scores of 11. If they manage to hit Jonar, his armor offers some protection (see the box, "Combat and Damage"). The guards have 11 mm charge rifles that inflict high impact (HI) damage as follows: $d6+1w/d6+3w/d6+1m$.

before they can even blink. First, read "Jonar Attacks" in the adjacent sidebar. If the guards survive his initial two actions, then see "The Guards Attack" and continue with subsequent rounds until the guards are defeated (go to 4) or Jonar is taken down (go to 5).

2

You leap out of hiding, moving simultaneously with the two security guards. You're beginning to put your memories back in order, and you know that you were sent here to uncover the Qaliban Corporation's latest dirty secret. The security of the Galactic Concord is at stake, so you don't have to pull any punches.

You draw your charge pistol and target the guard on the left as both of your enemies raise their charge rifles. This could wind up being a short fight. You just hope you don't die while your memories are still jumbled. You'd hate that.

Make a Skill Check

Jonar acts in the same time as the guards, in the Ordinary phase. See "Jonar Attacks" and "The Guards Attack," then apply damage at the same time. Continue with subsequent rounds until the guards are defeated (go to 4) or Jonar is taken down (go to 5).

3

You leap out of hiding, but the security guards are faster than you anticipated. You're beginning to put your memories back in order, and you know that you are here to uncover Qaliban Corporation's latest dirty secret. The security of the Galactic Concord is at stake, so you don't have to pull any punches—and you won't, provided you survive their first barrage.

Jonar Attacks

Jonar has a Modern Ranged Weapon-pistol score of 13 (this is the skill used with an 11 mm charge pistol). Because the situation is in Jonar's favor (short range, no cover, using a specialty skill), roll a d20 and a d4, subtracting the result of the d4 from the result of the d20.

Look at the hero sheet. You'll notice that the damage for the charge pistol is also divided into three sections. This represents the damage range that is inflicted for an Ordinary, Good, or Amazing result. If you roll higher than Jonar's skill score of 13, the attack misses.

Roll an attack and, if you succeed, roll damage against the first guard. Then do the same for the second guard. Each guard has a Durability of 8 stuns, 8 wounds, and 4 mortals. This is the amount of damage they can sustain before being knocked unconscious or killed. Jot down how much damage Jonar inflicted on each. (For example, if Jonar achieves a Good success against the first guard, roll d6+2w. This means the guard can suffer from 3 to 8 points of wound damage in this attack.)

Qaliban Guard #1

Stun 8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wound 8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mortal 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Qaliban Guard #2

Stun 8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wound 8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mortal 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Make a Skill Check

The Qaliban security guards act before Jonar, using their actions in the Ordinary phase. If Jonar isn't defeated, he acts in the Marginal phase. Because he doesn't act until the Marginal phase (the last phase of the current round), Jonar makes only one action (instead of his normal two).

First, see "The Guards Attack" and make the rolls described there to determine the results of their actions. Then see "Jonar Attacks" to resolve his actions against them.

Continue with subsequent rounds until the guards are defeated (go to 4) or Jonar is taken down (go to 5).

4

The last guard goes down as the fire-fight comes to an explosive end. You holster your pistol and start toward the exit. You take a moment to relieve one of the guards of his rifle on the way out. The higher firepower might come in handy before this business is settled.

With the new weapon in hand, you walk out of the cargo bay and into the corridor beyond.

► Go to 6.

5

White-hot pain explodes throughout your body. You start to fall as blackness clouds your eyes and fills your head. You can hear Diana's far-away voice, sexy even in its urgency (she's programmed to talk that way, after all), but you can't respond. You've been taken down by your enemies, defeated before you could complete your mission. This bitter thought follows you into the darkness, echoing as the silence overtakes you.

The End

6

"Good work, Jonar. You've just entered the main corridor that runs the entire length of the lower deck. In case you don't remember, you and your squad boarded this research station in a stealth pod. Things were going fine until the five of you walked into the pulse acceleration field. Nasty stuff . . ."

Right, this is Qaliban Research Station Omega, in orbit around the fourth moon of Redcrown. But . . . "My squad?"

"Not now, partner, we've got to find out what Qaliban Corporation is keeping so quiet about. The Concord believes that the security of the Verge and all of known space could be at stake."

"The Concord always believes that, Diana," you mumble as you reach a transit cage. Your memories become clearer and your finger reaches out to press Deck 3—the research bays. The cage begins to move.

On Deck 3, you take a moment to check for station personnel. Seeing none, you sprint toward Research Bay 12. Your memories are more like instinct at the moment, but that's better than nothing.

"The door's locked, Jonar. You'll have to decode the computer locking pad. I'll assist you, but you're going to have to do the work. Good luck, partner."

Make a Complex Skill Check

Jonar must decode the computer locking system to open the door to the research bay. He could use a pulse grenade, but he's trying to keep a low profile for the time being. Diana, his trusty AI companion, aids him in his work, providing a situation die bonus.

Using Jonar's Knowledge-computer operation skill, you must roll 11 or less on a d20 and a d12. Because the situation die is a bonus, subtract the result of the d12 from the result of the d20.

However, since decoding the computer lock is a complex skill check, Jonar must accumulate a certain number of successes before he achieves 3 failures. In this case, that number is 8 successes. Each roll of the dice represents a minute of work in this situation. An Ordinary result counts as 1 success, a Good result as 2 successes, and an Amazing result as 3 successes.

- If you achieve 3 failure results before earning 8 successes, go to 7.
- If you achieve 8 successes before accumulating 3 failure results, go to 8.

7

Your fingers dance over the keypad, working to break the locking code, when you slip up. The display flashes red and an alarm screams from speakers hidden in the ceiling. A security guard emerges from a door farther down the corridor. He charges in your direction.

- If you want to attack the guard, go to 9.
- If you want to disable the lock with a pulse grenade, go to 13.

8

Your fingers dance over the keypad, using your own training and Diana's expert help to break the locking code. After thousands of keystrokes and what seems like an eternity, the display flashes green and the door slides open.

- Go to 16.

9

The security guard draws a charge pistol from a low-slung holster and shouts, "Halt!" Concord marines don't halt, but he probably doesn't know that. Too bad for him. You level your charge rifle and aim for a vital spot.

Fighting the Guard

Jonar has a Modern Ranged Weapon-rifle skill score of 12. Though the range is short, this guard has a Dexterity resistance modifier of +2 steps, which makes it harder for Jonar to hit him with a Dexterity based skill. For this skill check, roll d20 and d6, adding the result of the d6 to the result of the d20.

The charge rifle inflicts d6+1 w/ d6+3w/d6+1m, depending on the type of success you achieve.

The guard's charge pistol is the same as the pistol listed on Jonar's hero sheet. The guard is also wearing a battle jacket, which provide! d4+1 protection against high-impact attacks. He has the same durability as the guards from the initial scene (If Jonar defeats the guard, he can don the battle jacket, which provides more protection than his battle vest.:

The guard has a skill score of 12. Due to the range and Jonar's Dexterity resistance modifier, he rolls a d20 and a d4. If the guard defeats Jonar, go to 5.

Guard

Stun	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wound	8	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mortal	4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Make an Action Check

The security guard acts in the Ordinary phase and has one action. Using a d20, make an action check.

- If you achieve a Good or Amazing success, go to 10.
- If you achieve an Ordinary success, go to 11.
- If you achieve a Marginal success, go to 12.

10

The guard appears fast, but you're faster. You fire twice, the roar of the charge rifle filling the nearly empty corridor with the sounds of battle.

Make a Skill Check

See the "Fighting the Guard" box to resolve combat. Jonar acts in the Amazing and Good or Good and Ordinary phases, while the guard returns fire in the Ordinary phase, if he is still conscious.



Continue with subsequent rounds until the guard is defeated (go on to 16) or Jonar is taken down (go to 5).

11

You lift your rifle, but the guard mirrors the action, bringing the barrel of his pistol up at the same time. The weapons fire simultaneously, spraying high-velocity bullets in both directions.

Make a Skill Check

See the "Fighting the Guard" box to resolve combat. Jonar acts in the Ordinary and Marginal phases, while the guard acts only in the Ordinary phase.

Continue with subsequent rounds until the guard is defeated (go on to 16) or Jonar is taken down (go to 5).

12

You lift your rifle, but the guard reacts faster, bringing the barrel of his pistol up and firing. You brace for the impact, hoping your armor does its job.

Make a Skill Check

See "Fighting the Guard" to resolve combat. The guard acts first, in the Ordinary phase. If Jonar survives the attack, he acts in the Marginal phase.

Continue with subsequent rounds until the guard is defeated (go on to 16) or Jonar is taken down (go to 5).

13

With the alarm blaring and the security guard rushing toward you, the time for subtlety has passed. You unclip a pulse

grenade from your belt and step back from the door. You get as far away as you can by the time the guard reaches the sealed entry to Research Bay 12. Then you toss the grenade, hoping to disrupt both the guard and the computer lock with the same electromagnetic discharge.

Make a Skill Check

Jonar has an Athletics— throw score of 14. Because of the range, he receives a -1 step bonus for this action. He rolls a d20 and a d4, subtracting the result of the d4 from the result of the d20.

- If you roll a success, go to 14.
- If you roll a failure, go to 15.

14

The pulse grenade bounces once between the charging guard and the locked door, then bursts into a cloud of sparkling electricity. The guard dances within the cloud for a few moments as the unleashed lightning outlines his body, then he collapses, shocked into unconsciousness. At the same time, the electrical charge shorts out the computer lock. The door slides open.

"A little flashier than I would have suggested, partner, but I won't complain about the results. Let's get moving before the rest of the station shows up."

Sexy Als. You've got to love them. Go on to 16.

15

Your throw goes wide, bouncing off the far wall and down the length of the corridor. It explodes well past the guard and the door, discharging its electrical energy harmlessly into the floor and walls. The guard smiles, raising his pistol and firing from point-blank range.

"Oooh, Jonar, that's going to hurt."

Sexy Als. You've got to love them. Go on to 5.

16

You've finally gotten the door to Research Bay 12 open. It's dark inside, and the few shapes and silhouettes you can make out give the place an oppressive air that puts you immediately on edge. You step into the room, sliding the door shut behind you.

Inside, you can see the dim lights of numerous computer stations and equipment. Near the center of the chamber, recessed lighting illuminates four clear

tanks filled with a strange liquid. It could be the light, but you have the distinct impression that the liquid itself is glowing. As you move closer, you can see that the liquid isn't empty. There are clumps of matter floating in the cylindrical tanks. In two of the tanks, the matter floats in separate and distinct parts. In the other two, however, the matter has come together in a form that sets your internal alarms to blaring—a form that looks humanoid.

Suddenly you realize that someone has come up behind you. You start to turn as the cold, unfriendly voice asks, "Can I help you?" A scientist stands behind you, dressed in a lab coat that proudly displays the Qaliban Corporation logo. "You're not supposed to be in here," he adds in a tone that's supposed to intimidate you, "this area is off limits."

► If you want to intimidate the scientist, go to 17.

► If you want to attack the scientist, go to 20.

17

The scientist isn't a threat to a Concord marine, and there's no point in wasting ammunition or energy on a noncombative foe. Instead, you raise yourself to your full height, put your hand on the butt of your pistol, and glare at the smaller man.

"So," you say in a threatening voice, "which body part do you want the bullet in? I like to give my victims a choice when it comes to these things."

Make a Skill Check

Jonar has an Interaction—*intimidate* skill score of 9. The scientist has a +1 step resistance modifier, but Jonar gets a bonus due to his imposing size and the hardware he's loaded down with—he looks like he means business. So, you roll a d20 and a d4, subtracting the result of the d4 from the result of the d20.

► If you roll a success, go to 18.
► If you roll a failure, go to 19.

18

Your words and manner have the desired effect. You see confusion play across the scientist's features, then settle into a look that's filled with fear. "My... my... mistake," he mutters, his eyes switching from your frown to your weapon and back again in rapid succession.

"Get. Lost. Now." you tell him, punctuating each word for maximum effect.

Before the third word leaves your lips, the scientist turns and starts to run for the door. You let him. You've got a mission to finish, and time is running out.

► Go to 23.

19

Your words and manner sound scary and intimidating to you, but the scientist just glares right back at you. "Who do you think you are, coming into my lab and trying to bully me? I'll have you know that I'm the boxing champion of the Qaliban Science Club, and I think I'm just going to have to teach you a lesson about manners!" He rolls up his sleeves and closes his fists, moving toward you with murderous intent.

► Go to 20.

20

You don't have time to play nice with this scientist. Besides, he's probably the leader of this vile experiment. Still, there's no point in shooting him. You are trained to disable an opponent with nothing more than your feet and hands. And you haven't gotten into a good brawl in days now. Funny, the order in which your memory comes back after exposure to pulse acceleration fields.

The scientist acts in the Marginal phase and has one action. Using a d20, make an action check for Jonar.

► If you achieve an Amazing, Good, or Ordinary success, go to 21.
► If you achieve a Marginal success, go to 22.

21

As a trained soldier, it comes as no surprise to you that you react faster than the guy in the lab coat. You slash and jab, throwing a combination of punches before the scientist even knows what hits him.

"Careful, partner," Diana says coyly, "don't take a brilliant mind for granted."

Make a Skill Check

Jonar performs both of his actions before the scientist. See the "Fighting the Scientist" box on the next page to resolve the unarmed combat.

If necessary, continue with subsequent rounds until the scientist is knocked out (go to 23) or he manages to knock out Jonar (go to 36).

22

As a trained soldier, you expect to have absolutely no problem with the brainiac facing you. You're surprised, therefore, when he leaps forward and throws a punch at approximately the same moment as you do.

"You always overestimate your own abilities, Jonar," Diana whispers sweetly. "I don't like to say I told you so, but . . ."

Make a Skill Check

Jonar and the scientist both act once, in the Marginal phase of this round. This means you make skill checks for both of them, applying the results at the end of the phase. See the "Fighting the Scientist" box on this page to resolve the unarmed combat.

If necessary, continue with subsequent rounds until the scientist is knocked out (go to 23) or he manages to knock out Jonar (go to 36).

23

With the scientist out of the way, you turn your attention back to the business that brought you here. Your memories are clearer now, but you check with Diana just to be sure.

"I brought my squad to this station to destroy an experiment code-named the Omega Variant," you relate to Diana as you move over to the control console. "Concord Intelligence considers this a hostile experiment in chemical weapons, with applications only for war and destruction. We can't allow it to be set loose in the Verge. We are to destroy the prototypes and the research files, retrieving any pertinent data for the Concord to

Fighting the Scientist

Jonar has the Unarmed Attack—*brawl* skill, with a score of 15. Roll a d20 and a d0. If Jonar connects, his unarmed attack inflicts the following damage: $d4+2s/d4+3s/d4+5s$.

The scientist has a durability of 6 stuns, 6 wounds, and 3 mortals. The scientist has an Unarmed Attack—*brawl* score of 8 and inflicts $d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s$ damage.

Scientist

Stun	6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Wound	6	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Mortal	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

use in subsequent legal proceedings. Does that about sum it up?"

"You've got it, partner," Diana says cheerfully, "though you may still be foggy on some things. We were separated from your squad when the stealth pod crashed. I don't know where the five soldiers are, or even if the ship is still intact. We're probably on our own, Jonar."

"Understood," you respond, checking the displays and monitors. "Can you help me manipulate these instruments, Diana?" She can, she tells you, but you knew that. She may not be at her full capacity within the memory harness, but there's no AI you'd rather be teamed with when the going gets rough.

"Follow my directions, Jonar," Diana says, "and we'll program the tanks to self-destruct. If you're really good, we'll even throw in a virus to delete the data files—after we've copied them, of course."

Make a Skill Check

Jonar must use his Knowledge—computer operation skill again. Because of the assistance provided by his AI, roll a d20 and a d12, subtracting the d12 result from the d20 result. As with the previous computer operation skill check, this is a complex skill check. To accomplish all that Diana has promised, you must roll 6 successes before you roll 3 failures. (Remember, you earn successes based on the results of each skill check: Failure, no successes; Ordinary, 1 success; Good, 2 successes; Amazing, 3 successes.)

- ▶ If you roll 6 successes before you roll 3 failure results, go to 24.
- ▶ If you roll 3 failure results before achieving 6 successes, go to 25.

24

You input codes and commands, following Diana's instructions while also relying on your own training and instincts. After a few intense moments and a short battle with the computer's internal defense routines, you finish your work. You step back, watching data flash across displays as indicators change to reflect your handiwork.

Make a Skill Check

Make an Awareness—intuition skill check. Jonar has a score of 10. Roll a d20 and a d0.

- ▶ If you roll a success, go to 26.
- ▶ If you roll a failure, go to 27.

25

You input codes and commands, following Diana's instructions while also relying on your own training and instincts. Suddenly, the computer's internal defenses spring to life, and you try to compensate for the shifting data blocks and encoded fires. It's a losing battle, however, and before you can finish your work the console locks up—you've been locked out of the computer network!

But that's not the worst of it. The chamber is rigged with additional defenses that you triggered by unsuccessfully hacking the computer network. A red mist rises from hidden vents near the floor and already you feel your thoughts slipping away. It must be some kind of nerve gas, you realize, and you barely hear Diana's urgent whispers.

"Don't breathe, Jonar . . . By the seven moons of Mordonor . . . don't breathe . . ."

Go to 37.

26

You've always trusted your intuition, and when that inner feeling stirs, you respond with utmost speed. Something's wrong in the shadowy chamber. You scan the area, drawing your charge pistol before you realize it's even in your hand. "Diana?" you ask in a whisper.

"Your instincts are good, partner," Diana coos appreciatively. "My sensors, such as they are, detect movement by the containment tanks. I defect a weapon, so be careful, Jonar."

There, sneaking around the side of one of the containment tanks, is another security guard. You also get a better look at the thing inside the cylinder.

Now that your eyes have adjusted to the dimness of the chamber, you see that the thing inside the tank is some kind of deformed monster. If the report was correct, and if you recall all of the details, the chemical bath has not only mutated the thing inside—it's made it aggressive and extremely violent as well. Mindless warriors produced through the introduction of a chemical agent—the Omega Variant as the report termed it—right into the heart of an enemy stronghold.

The guard doesn't realize that you've noticed him. Without another thought you fire a shot, hoping to take him down quickly.

Make a Skill Check

There's no need for an action check in this situation. Jonar's intuition has given him the advantage for this scene.

Due to Jonar's advantage, roll a d20 and a d6, subtracting the d6 result from the d20 result. Remember, Jonar has a skill score of 13 when using his charge pistol.



- If you achieve any kind of success, go to 28.
- If you roll a failure, go to 27.

27

Another security guard leaps out from behind the chemical-filled tanks, firing a charge pistol with unbridled enthusiasm. Thankfully, his glee is quickly drowned out by the crash of the explosive bullets.

Go to 5.

28

You fire once at the guard, your bullet smashing into the battle vest protecting his chest. The bullet ricochets off the protective vest and hits the cylindrical tank beside him. The tank shatters, spraying the guard's right arm with the liquid once contained within.

The guard screams as the chemical bath begins to mutate his arm. Now you know the secret of the Omega Variant—it changes whomever it touches. The guard collapses in pain, and all you can do for a moment is watch as the chemical slowly transforms the poor man into a mindless monster.

"Oh, partner, no one should have to suffer like that," Diana implores. "Show some mercy, Jonar."

You nod, then fire three shots into the poor wretch before the mutating process runs its course. The pain . . . no wonder the creatures go mad.

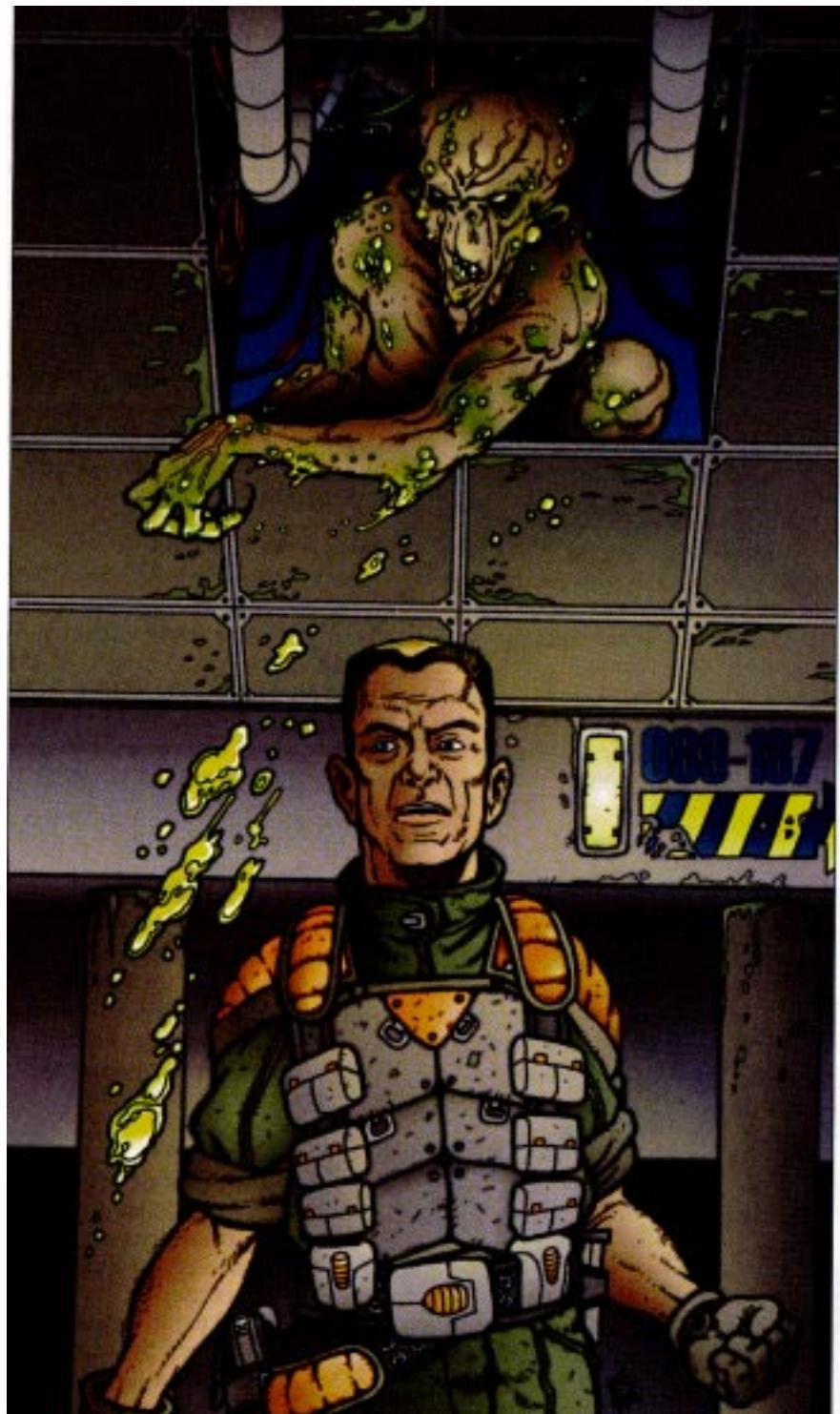
► Go on to 29.

29

You check the computer console to make sure that the files have been deleted. Then you recover the data disk filled with all the proof the Concord requires. "Time to go, Diana," you say grimly, glancing once more at the poor wretch lying beside the tanks. Diana agrees. She's very pragmatic, especially for an AI.

Before you leave, however, you decide to check on the inhabitants of the chemical baths. If the program you initiated did its job, all four of the bathers should have been cooked by an influx of deadly chemicals. And, indeed, the creatures in the three intact tanks have been dealt with. All indicators show no life signs whatsoever.

A problem arises with the fourth creature, though. The shattered tank is empty, and except for the transformed security guard, the area around the tank is clear.



Where's the fourth creature?

"Over there, Jonar," Diana says. "That open maintenance hatch. I think that's where the creature went."

Your mission isn't complete until you destroy all facets of the Omega Variant. You have no choice but to follow the creature into the maintenance conduits.

You step into the confined tangle of pipes and cables that fill the maintenance conduit. Small pools of the liquid from the

shattered tank leak into the darkness. You ignite your flashlight, snap a new clip into your charge pistol, and follow the creature's trail into the station's depths.

Make a Skill Check

At this point, make an Awareness—intuition skill check for Jonar. He has a score of 10. Roll a d20 and a d4, subtracting the result of the d4 from the result of the d20. (This time Jonar is

proceeding with caution, his senses extended and ready for any danger.)

- If you roll a success, go to 30.
- If you roll a failure, go to 31.

30

You proceed cautiously, watching for any signs of the creature. Your weapon is at the ready, your flashlight cutting a path through the darkness ahead. After walking a few dozen meters, you pause. Something's wrong. You listen, straining to catch the most subtle clue. Then you hear it. The sound of liquid dripping onto the metal grating at your feet. That means . . . it's directly above you!

Make an Action Check

The creature acts in the Good phase and has two actions. Using a d20, make an action check for Jonar.

- If you achieve an Amazing success, go to 32.
- If you achieve a Good success, go to 33.
- If you achieve an Ordinary or Marginal success, go to 34.

31

You proceed cautiously, watching for any signs of the creature. Your weapon is at the ready, your flashlight cutting a



path through the darkness ahead. After walking a few dozen meters, you pause. Something's wrong. Before you can get your bearings, you notice liquid dripping down from the pipes above. In that same instant, something heavy and snarling drops on top of you. The creature attacks!

Go to 34.

32

You roll, bringing your weapon up to target the creature above you. You wish you had room to use the charge rifle, but in these close quarters the pistol is a better bet. Before the creature has a chance to move, you fire, aiming for the eyes glowing in the darkness above.

Make Skill Check

See the "Fighting the Creature" box to resolve combat. Jonar makes an attack in the Amazing phase, then another one in the Good phase. The creature acts once in the Good phase, then again in the Ordinary phase.

If the round ends and both Jonar and the creature are still active, go to 35.

33

You roll, bringing your weapon up to target the creature above you. You wish you had room to use the charge rifle, but in these close quarters the pistol is a better bet. The creature drops toward you as you fire, its claws dangerously close and moving faster than you imagined.

Make a Skill Check

See the "Fighting the Creature" box to resolve combat. Jonar and the creature both act twice, first in the Good phase, then in the Ordinary phase.

If the round ends and both Jonar and the creature are still active, go to 35.

34

The creature moves with blinding speed, dropping upon you before you realize what's happening. You're in a fight for your life with a crazed mutant, and all you can think of is that a maintenance conduit is a lousy place for a marine to die.

Fighting the Creature

Roll a d20 and a d6, adding the d6 result to the d20 result (due to the creature's high Dexterity resistance modifier). Remember, Jonar has a skill score of 13 when using his charge pistol. Make a second attack in the Good phase, then let the creature perform its action.

The creature has a durability rating of 12 stuns, 12 wounds, and 6 mortals. It attacks with malformed claws (Unarmed Attack—brawl score of 16) and inflicts $d6+1s/d4+1w/d6+1w$. Use a d20 and a +d6 (due to Jonar's Strength resistance modifier) to determine the result of the creature's attack.

Each successful attack by the creature also causes Jonar to make a Stamina—endurance check, with a -d4 situation die. A failure indicates that some of the mutating chemical has affected Jonar; he suffers an additional d4w. If the creature removes all of Jonar's wound points during this round, then Jonar mutates into one of the creatures (go to 38).

Creature

Stun 12



Wound 12

Mortal 6



Make a Skill Check

See the "Fighting the Creature" box to resolve combat. The creature acts in the Good phase and in the Ordinary phase. If you achieved an Ordinary success, Jonar acts in the Ordinary phase and again in the Marginal phase. If you achieved only a Marginal success, Jonar acts in the Marginal phase and makes only the one action.

If the round ends and both Jonar and the creature are still active, go to 35.

35

After a short battle, you roll away from the creature and slide out of a hatch into a main corridor. You can hear the creature searching for you, but you think you have a moment or two to collect yourself before it emerges from the maintenance conduit.

So intent are you on watching for the creature, however, that you fail to notice the woman stepping up behind you. She erupts from the wall of the corridor, slashing at you with a deadly combat knife.

"You miserable, pathetic little man," she curses, and another memory returns to you. She's Alytra Tamon, the administrator of the station. The Omega Variant is her baby, and you recall that she's equally adept at fighting both on the corporate level and in actual war, "If you think you and a handful of Concord lackeys can ruin my plans, I must inform you that you are very, very wrong."

Make a Skill Check

Alytra gets the drop on Jonar. She acts twice, once in the Good phase and once in the Ordinary phase of the round. Jonar, if he's still able, doesn't get to act until the Marginal phase.

Alytra has a Melee Weapons—blade skill score of 12. Jonar has a powerful resistance modifier, however, so she rolls a d20+d6. Her weapon inflicts the following damage: d4+1w/d4+2w/d4+3w. She has a Dexterity resistance, so Jonar uses just a d20 when you make his skill check. She wears no armor.

If the round ends and both Jonar and Alytra are still active, go to 39.

36

Your ears ring and bones ache with every punch that gets through your defenses. You grudgingly admit that your enemy is better than you expected. Another blow connects, and your vision blurs. Blackness rushes toward you, and you feel your knees buckle.

You can hear Diana's faraway voice, but none of the words make sense. Then the words and the world around you fade as unconsciousness claims you.

The End

39

You leap away from Alytra, putting your back to the corridor wall. The woman smiles at you, brandishing her blade with expert care. The creature emerges from the open hatch then, obediently falling into formation beside the knife-wielding woman. "Now, Concord lackey," Alytra spits venomously, "you will die."

"Not yet," Diana whispers in your ear. "Here come the marines, sugar!"

With that, the door beside you slides open. Two of your squad, looking like they've already been through a battle, show up just in time for the war.

"Nice to see you, Jonar," Kristun says as she levels her stutter SMG.

"We're all that's left, Jonar, but I think we're more than enough," Grugar the weren growls through his thick tusks, hefting a render.

"You were saying, Alytra?" you ask with a grim smile. "Let's move, marines!"

What happens next? Pick up a copy of the ALTERNITY Player's Handbook and Gamemaster Guide, and decide for yourself!



After the miserable joke he sent us, ALTERNITY co-designer Bill Slavicsek is no longer allowed to write his own bio for DRAGON® Magazine articles.

The End

37

You try to hold your breath, but the red mist has already filled your lungs. A haze clouds your thoughts, and your limbs feel heavy and unresponsive. You've failed, you realize, then you collapse into oblivion.

The End

38

The creature's claws bite deep into your flesh, carving canyons of burning, festering blood. With each wound, you feel your body changing, realizing that the creature is mutating you. You're becoming just like it! It strikes again, and the pain overwhelms you, carrying you away. Your thoughts are replaced by anger and instinct, and even Diana's sexy voice can't hold back the change that overtakes you. You feel claws grow from your finger tips, and an urge to kill and destroy fills every fiber of your being. Jonar Cage is gone. Now there is only the creature. And it wants to kill . . .

The End



A FEW GOOD HENCHMEN

by Christopher Perkins

illustrated by Jim Crabtree

ADVENTURING IS A DANGEROUS PROFESSION. For this reason, it pays to have a few good henchmen to help with the gruntwork, stave the threat of a monster or two, and generally beef up an underwhelming band of adventurers. The following list provides a broad range of henchmen covering all four classes. These henchmen make excellent caravan guards, pirates, ruffians, and even tax collectors. All of them are meant for characters of good or neutral alignment, although you may adjust the henchmen's alignments and alter their personalities to suit your own campaign.

Avoid handing players the henchman's statistics, equipment lists, and personality traits. A henchman's skills and personality might not come to light immediately. There are a few evil NPCs nestled in the list, but their natures might not be obvious; their true *modus operandi* could remain hidden for a long time; greed, avarice, and treachery rear their ugly heads at the most inopportune moments, perhaps as the PCs are snuggling into their bedrolls for the night or preparing to divvy up the spoils of their recent success!

1. Phaelam Naebryl (F4/h/m): AL NG; AC 4 (chain mail, shield); MV 12; hp 31; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 1 or 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (cutlass); S 16 (+0/+1), D 12, C 12, I 10, W 9, Ch 15; ML 14; chain mail, shield, cutlass +1, light crossbow. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), carpentry (16), gaming (15), seamanship (13), weather sense (8).

Phaelam has one overwhelming preoccupation: himself. He likes to admire his own reflection in the blade of his magical cutlass.

2. Hrogar Dhur (F4/h/m): AL LG; AC 4 (banded mail); MV 12; hp 37; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-handed specialization; S 18/34 (+1/+3), D 9, C 16, I 9, W 10, Ch 11; ML 15; banded mail, bastard sword, short bow, dagger. NWP: blacksmithing (18) direction sense (11), hunting (9), riding—land-based (13), running (10), swimming (18).

Hrogar relishes any chance to go swimming—whether he's near a brook, a pond, or a city fountain. He has poor manners and even less civility.

3. Odano Fiora (F4/h/m): AL NG; AC 3 (plate mail); MV 12; hp 33 THAC0 17 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; S 17 (+1/+1), D 13, C 15, I 13, W 11, Ch 15; ML 13; plate mail, broad sword, short sword, dagger. NWP: animal handling (10), cooking (13), etiquette (15) mountaineering (n/a), navigation (11), weapon smithing (10).

Odano has a terrible fear of spiders. When confronted by an arachnid of larger-than-normal size, his morale drops to 7.

4. Elias Roake (F1/h/m): AL LG; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (long sword); S 15, D 15, C 14, I 11, W 8, Ch 11; ML 12; long sword -1, short bow, dagger. NWP: bowyer/fletcher (14), cobbling (15), riding—land-based (11), rope use (15), swimming (15).

Elias purchased a cursed sword from a shady merchant. However, he has no idea that the weapon, although impressive to behold, is maligned.

5. Yendeth Hlastan (F1/h/m): AL NG; AC 9 (leather jerkin); MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (broad sword); S 15, D 15, C 12, I 7, W 9, Ch 10; ML 14; leather jerkin (AC 9), broad sword, short sword. NWP: rope use (15), seamanship (16), swimming (15), weather sense (8).

Yendeth is a daring swashbuckler more comfortable aboard ship the astride a horse.

6. Haruna (F1/giff/f): AL CG; AC 6 (natural AC); MV 12; hp 13; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1d2+5/1d2+5 (fists), 2d6 (head butt) or by weapon type; MR 10%; S 18/96 (+2/+5), D 12, C 15, I 12, W 10, Ch 9; ML 16; footman's mace, two heavy crossbows. NWP: animal lore (12) direction (15), rope use (12), swimming (18).

Haruna likes to kick down doors and fire both her crossbows simultaneously, perforating anything that moves. She fires first and asks questions later.



Henchman Roster

If a player declares that he is searching for henchmen of a particular class, you may select candidates at random from the list below. Some of the demihuman henchman are multi-classed, appearing more than once in the list:

Fighter: #1-33, 36-39, 57, 75, 93-94

Ranger: #34-35

Thief: #36-58, 95

Wizard: #54-78

Cleric: #79-95

Bard: #96-101

Name	Class/Level	Race							
1 Phaelam Naebryl	F4	h							
2 Hrogar Dhuur	F4	h							
3 Odano Fiora	F4								
4 Elias Roake	F1	h							
5 Yendeth Hlastan	F1	h							
6 Haruna	F1								
7 Kress Lyntalin		h							
8 Zarad Al'Fanahk	F3								
9 Shaundrim Aleen	F1	h							
10 Maeve Immerlee	F4	he							
11 Zendor Starmantle	F4	d							
12 Skyla Ruindard	F3								
13 Randolph Massellan		h							
14 Duatha Noslach	F3	h							
15 Dawn Yhanarr	F3								
16 Joar Danthoul	F2	he							
17 Skeldar Ormspar	F3	h							
18 Yissith S'catha	F3		*						
19 Elask Shambryn	F2	he							
20 Mohjar	F3	ho							
21 Turekpa		ho							
22 Vhas Stojan	F3								
23 Aunlaur Elgaroun	F2	h							
24 Filfaeril Morningcloud	F3	elf	*						
25 Dorgan Irongut	F3								
26 Ghallas Redmane	F2	h							
27 Azblan Lazalar	F2	d							
28 Iregor Ironshard	F2	d							
29 Tullimok Whimwhistle	F6	gn							
30 Helgar Dragonmarch	F6	h							
31 Shanseera Havenstar	F2								
32 Gelemmor Jandather	F2	h							
33 Thultryl Talagul	F2	h							
34 Elwen Greenspear	R2	h							
35 Queltar Treewarden	R3	h							
36 Filani Sharpword	F1/T1	he							
37 Maegor Stormbane	F2/T2	d							
38 Pontifar Fiveknives	F3/T4	ha							
39 Tareel Isunduth	F2/T2	he							
40 Ambar Silvershield	T2	d	*						
41 Nagath Crabfoot	T2								
42 Barados Elioth	T2	h							
43 Vaelar Windleaf	T2	elf							
44 Khelbor Thistlepatch	T1	ha							
45 Pellas Uruthcart	T1	h							
46 Rallana Leatherstraps	T3	ha							
47 Wenda Starlight	T3	h							
48 Aurin Darkhammer	T2	d							
49 Yhestin Rugarra	T1	h							
50 Medrik Nestus	T2	h							
51 Spnydle Weathervane	T2	gn							
52 Dhelt Narhoun	T2	h							
53 Arnas Kelstryn	T1	d							
54 Glynn Shimmerstar	T1/W1	elf							
55 Pristrin Ruddersputter	W2/T2	gn							
56 Ayarin Luassath	T2/W2	he							
57 Lareth Scatterstar	F1/T1/W1	elf							
58 Jennys Silversword	T3/W2	he							
59 Tlemkat Loremantle	W2	he							
60 Alikus Ezanthir	w3								h
61 Dreen Pointy-ears	w3								*
62 Farene Raevenmoon	W4								
63 Lothius Arlymbar	w4								h
64 Jaedar Orymbade	w3								h
65 Shyleen Selfari	w2								he
66 Calamaigne Alshar									h
67 Mironn Rulthan	W4								
68 Tiara Elleander	w3								he
69 Rhani Aelan	w2								h
70 Azure Jhessail	w2								h
71 Kilipik Dwindledweomer	W1								
72 Thaun Argul	w2								h
73 Traemor Xultroun	W1								h
74 Aerwen Shanalon	W1								he
75 Gharr Lharaethe	W2/F2								he
76 Dhauna Sanshoon	W6								
77 Phaela Zanth	W1								h
78 Ulrym the Shady	W2								
79 Xuldra Kasaltarr	P2								h
80 Skobral Saerlask	P2								h
81 Ceremon Truthspeaker	P4								h
82 Glaeve Rhostarr									h
83 Brella Minirthas	P2								he
84 Brynn Lengareth	P3								ha
85 Jiri Willowtree	P2								ha
86 Laethor Maun	P3								ho
87 Varagon Sunbright	P3								h
88 Theleska Ceryl	P2								h
89 Astor Elaaazrin	P1								h
90 Irzoul Agatehammer	P1								d
91 Variel Amatarr	P1								h
92 Draegon Blaskarp	F3/P2								h
93 Keldor Farazyl	F2/P2								h
94 Waunthuar Jlendeth	F1/P1								he
95 Kieran Snuffpot	T2/P1	gn							
96 Diajani Innabryl	B2								he
97 Allustrus Melindor	B1								h
98 Seren Loreweaver									
99 Thomas o'Shaelee	B1								h
100 Madeleine von Essell	B3								h
101 Launir Nethandar	B1								h

7. Kress Lyntalin (F4/h/f): AL LG; AC 5 (studded leather, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 28; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; S 15, D 16, C 11, I 11, W 8, Ch 15; ML 12; studded leather armor, rapier, short sword, light crossbow, dagger. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), brewing (11), dancing (16), riding-land-based (11), seamstress/tailor (16).

Growing up with six brothers has afforded Kress a rough-and-tumble exterior. Her jibes are matched by a profound lack of restraint.

8. Zarad Al'Farzahk (F3/h/m): AL LG; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; S 18/77 (+2/+3), D 11, C 13, I 11, W 9, Ch 11; ML 16; chain mail, two scimitars, heavy crossbow. NWP: blacksmithing (18) charioteering (13) mountaineering (n/a), set snares (10), stonemasonry (18).

This dark-skinned warrior is tremendously proud of his heritage and fighting skills. His actions are governed by an unshakable sense of honor.

9. Shaundrim Aleen (F1/h/m): AL NG; AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 9;

THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+0/+1), D 9, C 16, I 12, W 8, Ch 10; ML 12; leather armor, broad sword, heavy crossbow, dagger. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), carpentry (16), leatherworking (12), running (10), swimming (16).

Shaundrim believes all halflings are thieves and all gnomes are illusionists. He trusts neither thieves nor illusionists, having played the victim too often.

10. Maeve Immerlee (F4/he/f): AL CG; AC 4 (chain mail, shield); MV 12; hp 26; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; SD 30% resistant to charm; S 16 (+0/+1), D 13, C 15, I 12, W 14, Ch 15; ML 13; chain mail, shield, long sword, short sword, dagger. NWP: animal handling (13), etiquette (15), hunting (13), running (9) set snares (12), tracking (14) weather sense (13).

Maeve enjoys gazing at the stars on clear, cold nights and generally prefers the company of elves to humans.

11. Zendor Starmantle (F4/d/m): AL LG; AC 3 (splint mail, Dexterity); MV 6; hp 35; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +4 to saves vs. poison and magic; S 17 (+1/+1), D

15, C 15, I 9, W 12, Ch 11; ML 15; splint mail, battle axe, dagger. NWP: blacksmithing (17), brewing (9), fire-building (11), heraldry (9), mountaineering (n/a), set snares (14), singing (11).

Zendor is a gentle dwarf by nature, fond of children and good wine. By contrast, he's quick to anger and easily stirred into conflict.

12. Skyla Ruindard (F3/d/f): AL LG; AC 7 (ring mail); MV 6; hp 31; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA wrestling specialization; SD +4 to saves vs. poison and magic; S 18 (+1/+2), D 12, C 15, I 12, W 13, Ch 15; ML 14; ring mail, battle axe, hand axe, short bow. NWP: armorer (10), mountaineering (n/a), weaponsmithing (9).

Skyla's a gruff but friendly dwarf who likes to sleep through the daylight hours

Key to Abbreviations

F	Fighter
R	Ranger
P	Priest
T	Thief
W	Wizard
d	dwarf
e	elf
ha	halfling
he	half-elf
h	human
*	gnome
	special (see description)

and roam at night. She prefers to subdue opponents with her superior strength than to harm them.

13. Randolph Massellan (F3/h/m): AL NG; AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 29; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; S 18/06 (+1/+3), D 8, C 17, I 9, W 9, Ch 15; ML 12; plate mail, long sword, short sword. NWP: artistic ability-painting (9), direction sense (10), running (11), seamanship (9), swimming (18).

Randolph spent most of his youth on the sea and likes to watch ships pulling into the harbor. His nautical experience is far less than what he openly proclaims.

14. Duatha Noslach (F3/h/f): AL CC; AC 3 (plate mail); MV 12; hp 23; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1 or 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (broad sword); S 18 (+1/+2), D 12, C 11, I 15, W 10, Ch 13; ML 14; plate mail, broad sword, long bow, dagger. NWP: armorer (13), bowyer/fletcher (11), riding—land-based (13), weapon-smithing (12).

Duatha is a towering, imposing woman who likes besting naive young men in contests of strength. She appreciates the dwarves' love of good ale.

15. Dawn Yhanarr (FS/h/f): AL LG; AC 4 (banded mail); MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (bastard sword); S 14, D 12, C 13, I 11, W 10, Ch 12; ML 16; banded mail, bastard sword, light crossbow. NWP: alertness (11), blind-fighting (n/a), endurance (13).

Dawn has acute senses and receives a +1 bonus to surprise rolls. She is willing to sacrifice herself to save her

employer if that individual succeeds in winning her confidence.

16. Joar Danthoul (F2/he/m): AL CG; AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 13; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type +1 (strength); SA weapon specialization (long bow); SD 30% resistant to charm; S 17, D 13, C 15, I 7, W 12, Ch 9; ML 11; leather armor, halberd, long bow. NWP: bowyer/fletcher (12) hunting (11), tracking (12).

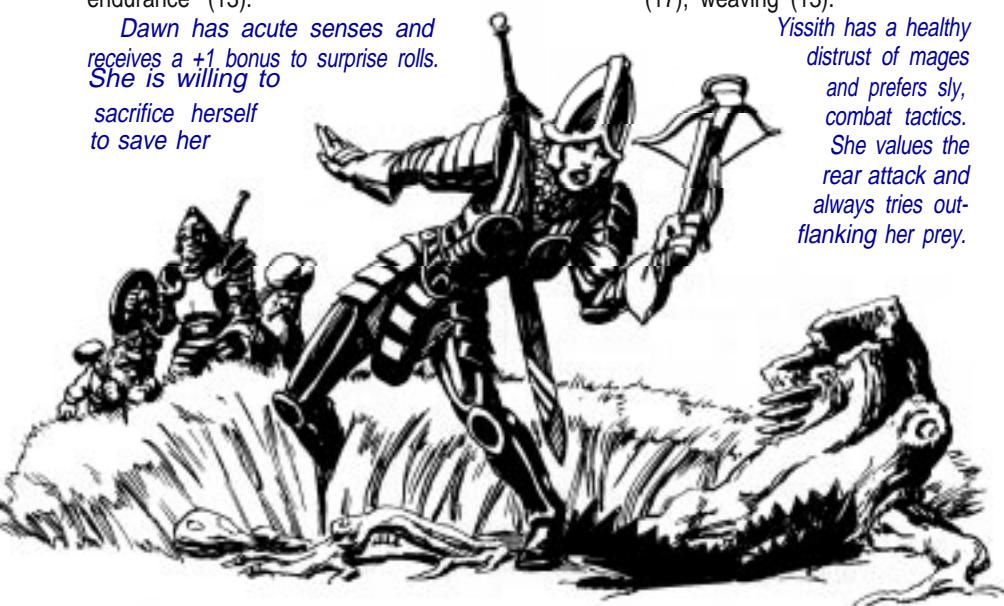
Joar looks more like a strapping young farmhand than an adventurer. He has few recognizably elven characteristics apart from his keen skills with the bow.

17. Skeldar Ormspar (F3/h/m): AL CG; AC 4 (chain mail, shield); MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1 or 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (battle axe); S 17 (+1/+1), D 11, C 15, I 9, W 11, Ch 7; ML 14; chain mail, shield, battle axe, heavy crossbow. NWP: endurance (15), mining (8), tracking (11).

Skeldar has a nasty scar from his left ear to his chin, inflicted by the northmen who razed his village. He is a fierce, scornful man of deep passion.

18. Yissith S'catha (F3/lizard man/f): AL NG; AC 1 (natural AC, shield, Dexterity); MV 9; hp 24; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 3/2 (sword) or 3 (darts); Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with darts; specialization (long sword); S 15, D 17, C 15, I 14, W 12, Ch 6; ML 11; long sword, shield, 12 darts. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), fishing (11), set snares (16), swimming (15), tracking (17), weaving (13).

Yissith has a healthy distrust of mages and prefers sly, combat tactics. She values the rear attack and always tries outflanking her prey.



19. Elask Shambryn (F2/he/m): AL LG; AC 4 (studded leather, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1 or 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (long bow); SD 30% resistant to charm; S 15, D 17, C 13, I 15, W 11, Ch 16; ML 15; studded leather armor, spear, long bow. NWP: animal lore (15), bowyer/fletcher (16) cooking (15), etiquette (16), heraldry (15), Modern languages (15), riding—land-based (14).

Elask has a handsome, innocent face that belies a sharp wit and a shrewd mind. The half-elf harbors no prejudices and is generally forgiving.

20. Mojhar (F3/half-orc/m): AL N; AC 7 (studded leather armor); MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; SD 60' infravision; S 14, D 13, C 9, I 12, W 14, Ch 7; ML 11; studded leather armor, two short swords, light crossbow, dagger. NWP: artistic ability—poetry (14), blind-fighting (n/a), direction sense (15), Modern languages (12), set snares (12).

Mojhar is unattractive and oftentimes crude, but he's also a gifted storyteller and poet with an untapped talent for the written word.

21. Turekpa a.k.a. Annalee Woodleaf (F3/half-orc/f): AL NE; AC 8 (leather armor); MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (cutlass); S 13, D 12, C 13, I 11, W 9, Ch 13; ML 11; cutlass, light crossbow, dagger. NWP: endurance (13), gaming (13) survival—forest (11).

Turekpa was raised by orcs, but she has few physical orcish traits. A botched raid on a merchant caravan led to her capture, where she was taken to the nearest city as a slave and later escaped.

22. Vhas Stojan (F3/centaur/m): AL CG; AC 4 (natural AC, shield); MV 18; hp 29; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 3; Dmg 1d6/1d6 and weapon; SA weapon 8 shield specialization; S 17 (+1/+1), D 12, C 16, I 11, W 15, Ch 13; ML 15; footman's mace, long bow, 20 sheaf arrows, wooden shield. NWP: bowyer/fletcher (11), hunting (14), set snares (11), survival—forest (11), tracking (15).

Vhas finds druids and woodland life too stoic and likes to indulge his fancies in human cities. He does not like being stared at like some sideshow oddity, however.

23. Aunlar Elgaroun (F2/h/m): AL LG; AC 3 (chain mail, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1 or 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (long sword); 5 15, D 16, C 10, 19, W 10, Ch 14; ML 12; chain mail, long sword, long bow, *boots of elvenkind*. NWP: animal handling (9) blacksmithing (15), hunting (9) riding—land-based (13).

Aunlaur is kind but very impressionable and easily manipulated by charming young ladies. His boots of elvenkind were gifts from a dryad who seduced (and later released) him.

24. Filfaeril Morningcloud (F3/elf/m): AL LG; AC 4 (chain mail, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 23; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; +1 to hit with bow; SD 90% resistant to *charm*; S 15, D 15, C 11, I 12, W 10, Ch 15; ML 13; chain mail, long sword, short sword, long bow. NWP: bowyer/fletcher (14), endurance (11) etiquette (15), riding—land-based (13) rope use (15).

Filfaeril has dedicated his life to purging the world of evil menaces. He lacks a sense of humor and seldom gets the jist of a good joke.

25. Dorgan Irongaut (F3/giff/m): AL NG; AC 5 (natural AC, shield); MV 12; F3; hp 30; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 2 or 1; Dmg 1 d2+7/1 d2+7 (fists), 2d6 (head butt) or by weapon type; MR 10%; 5 19 (+3/+7), D 12, C 16, I 13, W 11, Ch 12; ML 15; broad sword, wheel-lock pistol, shield. NWP: blacksmithing (19) brewing (13), endurance (16) singing (12) stonemasonry (17).

Dorgan loves baked pies and social occasions. He also likes head-butting contests. However, he is fearful of water and doesn't like to swim.

26. Ghallas Redmane (F2/h/m): AL N; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 20; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; 5 16 (+0/+1), D 10, C 15, I 11, W 10, Ch 15; ML 15; chain mail, two broad swords, light crossbow, throwing axe. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), endurance (15) leatherworking (11).

Ghallas is an angry young man who blames goblins and hobgoblins for the death of his family. He receives +1 to attack and damage rolls when fighting goblinkin.

27. Azblan Lazalar (F2/d/m): AL LG; AC 3 (plate mail); MV 6; hp 24; THAC0

19 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (flail); SD +4 to save vs. poison and magic; 5 17 (+1/+1), D 8, C 18, I 13, W 9, Ch 12; ML 16; plate mail, footman's flail, warhammer. NWP: appraising (13), blacksmithing (17) mountaineering (n/a), survival—mountains (13).

Azblan has one weakness—he cannot resist the alluring gleam of a polished gem.

28. Iregor Ironhard (F2/d/m): AL CG; AC 3 (plate mail); MV 6; hp 24; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; SD +5 to saves vs. poison and magic; 5 18/23 (+1/+3), D 12, C 18, I 11, W 10, Ch 9; ML 16; plate mail, battle axe, dagger. NWP: blacksmithing (18) endurance (18) running (18), stonemasonry (16),

Despite his brute strength and fearlessness, Iregor worries his comrades by the way in which he carresses and speaks to his prized battle axe.

29. Tullimok Whimwhistle (F3/gn/m): AL LG; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 6; hp 20; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon specialization; SD +4 to saves vs. magic; 5 14, D 17, C 12, I 12, W 8, Ch 13; ML 11; leather armor, short sword, dagger, wheel-lock pistol. NWP: artistic ability-acting (13), cobbling (17), leatherworking (12) Modern languages (12), navigation (10), swimming (14).

"Tully" has a flair for acting and does wonderful impersonations of his comrades. He plays the part of an absent-minded gnome to catch his enemies off guard.

30. Helgar Dragonmarch (F6/h/m): AL NG; AC 3 (plate mail); MV 12; hp 47; THAC0 15 (base); #AT 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon (two-handed sword) and two-handed specialization; 5 18/56 (+2/+3), D11, C 15, I 12, W 11, Ch 14; ML 16; plate mail, two-handed sword +1. NWP: armorer (10), blind-fighting (n/a), endurance (15) mountaineering (n/a).

Helgar expects an equal share of the treasure from any quest. He is loud and domineering, using his fierce presence to push others around.

31. Shanseera Havenstar (F2/h/f): AL NG; AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; 5 15, D 16, C 12, I 11, W 11, Ch 16; ML 13; leather armor, footman's mace, light cross-

bow, dagger. NWP: cooking (11), dancing (16), gaming (16) pottery (14), riding—land-based (14).

Shanseera is a stunningly attractive woman with several unpleasant traits including a brash disregard for authority and a snorting laugh.

32. Gelemmor Jandfather (F2/he/m): AL LG; AC 4 chain mail, shield); MV 12; hp 18; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1 or 3/2; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (long sword); SD 30% resistant to *charm*; 5 14, D 13, C 14, I 13, W 11, Ch 12; ML 12; chain mail, shield, long sword, short sword +1. NWP: animal handling (10), etiquette (12) heraldry (13), Modern languages (13) riding—land-based (14).

Gelemmor has distanced himself from his wealthy merchant family so that he can leave his own mark on the world. He is a spoiled brat too eager to flaunt his magical short sword and equally determined to incur the wrath of those around him.

33. Thultryl Talagul (F2/h/f): AL CG; AC 7 (leather armor, shield); MV 12; hp 16; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type +2 (weapon specialization); SA weapon specialization (scimitar); 5 13, D 9, C 12, I 13, W 11, Ch 15; ML 12; leather armor, scimitar, light crossbow. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), endurance (12) survival—arid (13).

Thultryl is a fierce, dark-skinned warrior who speaks with the edge of her scimitar. A former slave, she is an unrelenting champion for the oppressed.

34. Elwen Greenspear (R2/h/f): AL NG; AC 6 (hide armor); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA ranger abilities; 5 16 (+0/+1), D 14, C 13, I 14, W 12, Ch 16; ML 13; hide armor, short sword, spear +1. NWP: cooking (14) hunting (11), set snares (13) survival—forest (14), tracking (12).

Elwen has no taste for city life and loathes the decadent lifestyle. Her forestry skills make her an excellent guide.

35. Queltar Treewarden (R3/h/m): AL LN; AC 7 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 22; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon style specialization; ranger abilities; S 15, D 15, C 13, I 12, W 16, Ch 15; ML 14; leather armor, long sword, short sword, long bow. NWP: bowyer/fletcher (14) hunting (15), survival—forest (12) tracking (16).

Queltar is aloof, snide, and condescending—quick to tell others “I told you so.” A high-level druid repaid Queltar for a favor by granting him the ability to speak with plants once/day.

36. Filani Sharpssword (F1/T1/he/f);

AL N; AC 6 (leather armor, shield, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA weapon specialization (long sword); SD 30% resistant to charm; S 14, D 15, C 13, I 11, W 12, Ch 13; ML 12; PP 35%, OL 20%, FRT 15%, MS 20%, HS 20%, DN 25%, CW 60%, RL 0%; leather armor, shield, long sword, dagger. NWP: appraising (11), disguise (12) fire-building (11), survival—forest (11).

Raised by druids after her parents were slain by evil wizards, Filani has no love of spellcasters.

37. Maegor Stormbane (F2/T2/d/m); AL LN; AC 6 (leather armor, shield, Dexterity) or 2 (when tumbling); MV 6; hp 18; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SD +4 to save vs. poison and magic; S 17 (+1/+1), D 15, C 15, I 8, W 10, Ch 9; ML 12; PP 25%, OL 30%, FRT 30%, MS 20%, HS 25%, DN 25%, CW 70%, RL -5%; leather armor, battle axe, hand axe, dagger. NWP: endurance (15) mountaineering (n/a), stonemasonry (15) tumbling (15).

Maegor has a lingering fear of undead—the result of a childhood encounter he refuses to relate.

38. Pontifar Fiveknives (F3/T4/ha/m); AL NG; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity), 1 when tumbling; MV 6; hp 19; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with thrown weapons; S 15, D 17, C 12, I 13, W 9, Ch 12; ML 9; PP 65%, OL 45%, FRT 20%, MS 55%, HS 45%, DN 20%, CW 65%, RL 5%; leather armor, five throwing daggers, short sword +1. NWP: appraising (13), blind-fighting (n/a), cobbling (17), heraldry (13), tumbling (17).

Each of Pontifar's five throwing daggers is marked with a green dragon emblem, Pontifar's dream is to slay a dragon and make off with the lizard's hoard.

39. Tareel Isunduth (F2/T2/he/f); AL NG; AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 17 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SD 30% resistant to charm; S 16 (+0/+1), D 16, C 12, I 12, W 11, Ch 15; ML 12; PP 35%, OL

25%, FRT 20%, MS 25%, HS 25%, DN 20%, CW 75%, RL 5%; leather armor, long sword, short sword, dagger. NWP: dancing (16), disguise (14) etiquette (15), local history (15) Modern languages (12), riding—land-based (14).

Tareel is not proud of her thievery but regards her skills as necessary for city life. A cautious girl, she prefers to backstab an enemy than face him directly.

40. Ambar Silvershield (T2/d/m); AL NG; AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 2 (with tumbling); MV 6; hp 12; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +4 to saves vs. poison and magic; S 16 (+0/+1), D 16, C 15, I 13, W 10, Ch 14; ML 12; leather armor, battle axe, wheel-lock pistol. NWP: brewing (13), gem cutting (14) rope use (16), stonemasonry (15), tumbling (16).

Ambar has many heroic siblings and ancestors. He is proud to carry the family name info baffle but has a potentially crippling fear of failure.

41. Nagath Crabfoot (T3/mongrelman/m); AL LN; AC 6 (natural AC, Dexterity); MV 6; hp 14; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD mimicry; S 9, D 15, C 13, I 10, W 12, Ch 4; ML 7; PP 30%, OL 20%, FRT 25%, MS 35%, HS 30%, DN 45%, CW 55%, RL 10%; short sword, six darts. NWP: animal handling (11), appraising (10), artistic ability—woodcarving (12), set snares (14).

Nagath is a greedy mongrelman with a xvart's pate, lizard man scales, shaggy bugbear fur, gnoll ears and one crabman leg. He does not pilfer from the needy, always picking on the well-to-do who find him so repulsive.

42. Barados Ellith (T2/h/m); AL N; AC 5 (Dexterity, ring of protection +1) or 1 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+0/+1), D 18, C 13, I 13, W 11, Ch 15; ML 10; PP 40%, OL 35%, FRT 20%, MS 40%, HS 30%, DN 25%, CW 70%, RL 0%; ring of protection +1, short sword, light crossbow. NWP: appraising (13) blind-fighting (n/a), disguise (14), tightrope walking (18) tumbling (18).

Barados is a handsome rake who cares only for himself. He has a bounty on his head for stealing a wizardess' 5,000 gp magic jar gem. He has since sold the precious stone and procured a minor magical ring.

43. Vaelar Windleaf (T2/elf/m); AL NG; AC 8 (Dexterity) or 2 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 10; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with bows; SD 90% resistant to charm; S 14, D 16, C 12, I 13, W 12, Ch 14; ML 15; PP 35%, OL 20%, FRT 15%, MS 35%, HS 40%, DN 30%, CW 80%, RL 10%; short sword, long bow. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), jumping (14), reading lips (11), tumbling (16).

Vaelar's piercing blue eyes can stir fear in the most resolute foe and pry truth out of the most stalwart liar. He has “friends” in several notable thieves' guilds and is apt to learn 1d6 important rumors shortly after entering any large city.

44. Khelbor Thistlepatch (T1/ha/m); AL CG; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 1 (when tumbling); MV 6; hp 5; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with thrown weapons; S 11, D 17, C 13, I 9, W 12, Ch 11; ML 12; PP 35%, OL 35%, FRT 20%, MS 35%, HS 35%, DN 20%, CW 55%, RL-5%; leather armor, short sword, throwing dagger, six darts. NWP: brewing (13), fire-building (11), juggling (16), riding—land-based (15), rope use (17).

Khel frequently talks to himself sometimes carrying on an entire conversation. He also collects discarded fragments bone, placing them carefully in pouches.

45. Pellas Uruthcart (T1/h/m); AL NE; AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 15, D 16, C 13, I 8, W 9, Ch 9; ML 13; PP 25%, OL 25%, FRT 15%, MS 20%, HS 15%, DN 25%, CW 60%, RL 0%; leather armor, short sword, four throwing daggers. NWP: jumping (15), rope use (16), set snares (15), swimming (15).

Pellas delights in backstabbing his opponents. He would rather kill a downed adversary than fake a chance on letting his enemy threaten him in the future.

46. Rallana Leatherstraps (T3/ha/f); AL NG; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 6; T3; hp 15; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with thrown weapons; S 11, D 17, C 13, I 12, W 10, Ch 9; ML 12; leather armor, short sword, sling. NWP: Appraising (12), blind-fighting (n/a), juggling (16), leatherworking (12) tightrope walking (17).

This stout halfling is irritable and testy, hurling insults and disparaging remarks

without giving forethought to those she might offend. So gifted is she at insults that she can hurl the equivalent of a taunt spell once/day, affecting a group of 1d4 foes,

47. Wenda Starlight (T3/h/f): AL NE; AC 4 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 0 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 14; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 10, D 18, C 11, I 12, W 12, Ch 11; ML 12; PP 35%, OL 35%, FRT 30%, MS 30%, HS 25%, DN 25%, CW 70%, RL 10%; leather armor, short sword +1, two throwing daggers. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), direction sense (13), riding—land-based (15), rope use (18), tumbling (18).

Wenda's goal is to find and sell magical items, and she'll go to any lengths to acquire them—even if it means pretending to be a decent person.

48. Aurin Darkhammer (T2/d/m): AL N; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 1 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon style specialization; S 17 (+1/+1), D 17, C 15, I 12, W 8, Ch 9; ML 17; PP 30%, OL 40%, FRT 30%, MS 40%, HS 35%, DN 25%, CW 50%, RL -5%; short sword, dagger, sap. NWP: appraising (12), blind-fighting (n/a), leather-working (12), set snares (16), tumbling (17).

Aurin has dreadful body odor, foul breath, and a generally unpleasant demeanor. His virtues are that he's deliberate and utterly fearless. He prefers gold to all other manner of treasure and refuses to carry any other coinage.

49. Yhestin Rugarra (T1/h/m): AL NG; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 1 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 17, C 15, I10, W 11, Ch 11; ML 6; PP 30%, OL 30%, FRT 15%, MS 25%, HS 20%, DN 25%, CW 60%, RL 0%; leather armor, short sword, dagger. NWP: direction sense (12) forgery (16), gaming (11), swimming (13), tumbling (17).

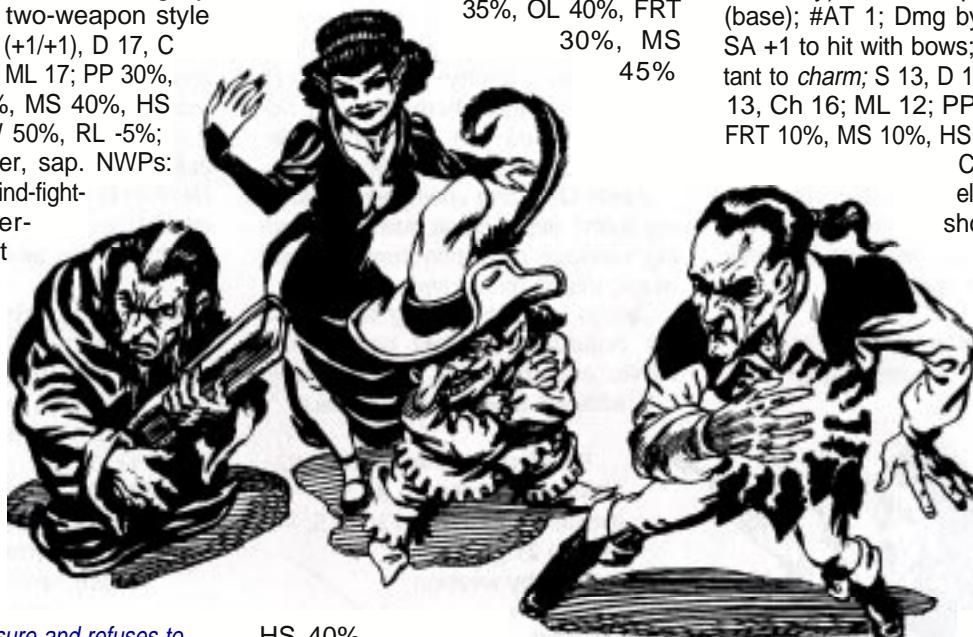
Yhestin talks a good fight and seems equipped to defend himself, but truthfully

he's a terrible coward who cannot be relied upon in battle.

50. Medrik Nestus (T2/h/m): AL CN; AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 16, C 9, I 7, W 11, Ch 7; ML 14; PP 35%, OL 25%, FRT 15%, MS 30%, HS 25%, DN 15%, CW 70%, RL 0%; leather armor, short sword, light crossbow. NWP: animal handling (10), riding—land-based (14), rope use (16), set snares (15).

Medrik is a callous young man whose foolhardy antics and wanton recklessness have earned him many enemies, even among his so-called "friends."

51. Spyndle Weathervane (T2/gn/m): AL NG; AC 4 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 0 (when tumbling); MV 6; hp 10; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit goblins and kobolds; SD +3 to saves vs. magic; S 9, D 18, C 11, I 12, W 10, Ch 12; ML 12; PP 35%, OL 40%, FRT 30%, MS 45%



HS 40%, CW 45%, RL 0%; leather armor, four daggers. NWP: ancient history (11) appraising (12), juggling (17) reading lips (10), tumbling (18).

Spyndle can talk an ogre to sleep with his inane banter. He dominates the conversation with stories that never seem to end. He's considerate and polite to a fault.

52. Dhelt Narhoun (T2/h/m): AL N; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity), 1 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 8; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, D 17, C 9, I 10, W 6, Ch 10; ML 12; leather armor, short sword. NWP:

forgery (16) jumping (16) rope use (17), tightrope walking (17), tumbling (17).

Dhelt believes Lady Luck is his bed-mistress and often places undue risk on himself and his colleagues just to show how he can tempt fate and prevail.

53. Arnas Kelstry (T1/d/m): AL NG; AC 7 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 3 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16, D 15, C 15, I10, W 9, Ch 11; ML 12; PP 25%, OL 30%, FRT 30%, MS 20%, HS 15%, DN 15%, CW 50%, RL 5%; leather armor, short bow, hand axe +1, dagger. NWP: ancient history (9), appraising (10), gem cutting (13), tumbling (15).

Arnas served as an apprentice to a dwarven gem cutter until he stole some of the masters finest gems and sold them for his magical hand axe.

54. Glynn Shimmerstar (T1/W1/elf/m): AL NG; AC 4 (elven chain mail, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 5; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with bows; SD 90% resistant to charm; S 13, D 15, C 15, I 16, W 13, Ch 16; ML 12; PP-5%, OL 15%, FRT 10%, MS 10%, HS 5%, DN 20%, CW 50%, RL 0%; elven chain mail, short sword, short bow. NWP: ancient languages W3, astrology (16), engineering (13), reading/ writing—Elvish (17), reading/ writing—Common (17), spellcraft (14), weather sense (12).

Spells (1): detect magic, erase, feather fall*, grease, hold portal, light, magic missile, phantasmal force, read magic, sleep.

Glynn is thoughtful and poetic, never one to charge headlong into battle nor one to miss the beauty in an autumn sunset.

55. Pristrin Ruddersputter (W2/illusionist/T2/gn/m): AL NG; AC 5 (Dexterity), 1 (when tumbling); MV 6; hp 9; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 19, C 12, I 16, W 11, Ch 12; ML 9; PP 40%, OL 50%, FRT 45%, MS 50%, HS 40%, DN 35%

CW 65%, RL 10%; short sword. NWP: appraising (16), engineering (13) gem cutting (17), reading/writing—Gnomish (17), set snares (18) spellcraft (14) tumbling (19).

Spells (3): *audible glamer, cantrip, color spray*, dancing lights, detect magic, phantasmal force*, read magic, spook**.

Pristrin fancies himself an inventor and makes strange gizmos out of the oddest materials. He is terrified of ogres after having nearly been cooked by one and suffers -2 penalties to morale checks when confronted by ogres and giants.

56. Ayarlin Luassath (T2/W2/he/f): AL LN; AC 9 (Dexterity) or 5 (with armor spell); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, D 15, C 12, I 16, W 14, Ch 15; SD 30% resistant to *charm*; ML 12; PP 35%, OL 15%, FRT 15%, MS 35%, HS 40%, DN 30%, CW 80%, RL 10%; long sword, short bow, dagger. NWP: etiquette (15), herbalism (14) reading/writing—Common (17), riding-airborne (12), riding—land-based (17) spellcraft (14), swimming (11).

Spells (2): *alarm, armor*, burning hands*, charm person, color spray, detect evil, detect magic, read magic, spook, taunt unseen servant, wizard mark*.

Ayarlin is a brooding, sullen girl with a calm and melodious voice. She shaves her head, wears a cowl, and generally stays out of harm's way.

57. Lareth Scatterstar (F1/T1/W1/elf/m): AL CG; AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 2



(when tumbling); MV 12; hp 6; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA +1 to hit with bows; 30% resistant to *charm*; S 15, D 16, C 11, I 16, W 11, Ch 15; ML 15; leather armor, long bow, long sword, dagger. NWP: agriculture (16) artistic ability—drawing (11), bowyer/fletcher (15), disguise (14), Modern languages (16), reading/writing—Elvish (17) reading/writing—Common (17) spellcraft (14) tumbling (16).

Spells (1): *color spray, detect magic, identify, jump, magic missile, read magic, shield: sleep, Tenser's floating disc*.

Lareth received a faerie blessing as a child and gains +1 to all saving throws. He is gifted with good looks and is strikingly arrogant.

58. Jennys Silversword (T3/W2/he/f): AL NG; AC 6 (Dexterity), 2 when tumbling; MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD 30% resistant to *charm*; S 14, D 18, C 9, I 17, W 11, Ch 16; ML 14; PP 35%, OL 20%, FRT 30%, MS 55%, HS 55%, DN 35%, CW 90%, RL 20%; quarter-staff, short sword. NWP: agriculture (17), artistic ability—sculpting (11), blind-fighting (n/a), herbalism (15) riding—land-based (14), tightrope walking (18), tumbling (18), spellcraft (15).

Spells (2): *alarm, charm person, dancing lights*, detect magic, identify, mending, message, protection from evil, read magic, shield: spider climb*.

Jennys uses her thieving skills to aid her acquisition of spell components, scrolls, and spellbooks. She speaks in whispers, never raising her voice.

59. Tlemkat Loremantle (W2/diviner/he/f): AL LG; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 15; W2; hp 5; THAC0 21 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; 30% resistant

to *charm*; S 7, D 15, C 11, I 17, W 16, Ch 9; ML 11; dagger. NWP: ancient history (16), ancient languages (17) astrology (17), herbalism (15), reading/writing—Common (18), reading/writing—Elvish (18), religion (16), spellcraft (15).

Spells (2): *audible glamer, cantrip, charm person, detect magic*, detect undead, feather fall, light, magic missile, phantasmal force*, sleep, Tenser's floating disc*.

Tlemkat is a demure little half-elf with a squeaky little voice. She is too timid to speak her mind and cannot assume leadership roles.

60. Alikus Ezanthis (W3/h/m): AL LN; AC 8 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, D 16, C 15, I 16, W 14, Ch 13; ML 10; dagger. NWP: engineering (13), gem cutting (14), heraldry (16), herbalism (14), reading/writing—Common (17) spellcraft (14).

Spells (2/1): *cantrip, color spray*, comprehend languages, detect magic, erase, magic missile: mount, read magic, ventriloquism; blur*, fools' gold, invisibility, knock, levitate, ray of enfeeblement, summon swarm, wizard lock*.

Alikus is a spy sent by a local wizards' guild to retrieve magical items and lore. He plans to infiltrate a group of adventurers and use them to find unearthed arcana and bring these "trinkets" back to his guild.

61. Dreen Pointy-ears (W3/mon-gremlin/m): AL CG; AC 5 (natural MV 9; hp 12; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (claw) by weapon type; SD mimicry; S 12, D 8, C 15, I 17, W 12, Ch 3; ML 13; dagger, gnarled staff. NWP: astrology (17), engineering (14) herbalism +1 (16), reading/writing—Bugbear (18), reading/writing—Common (18) reading/writing—Lizard Man (18).

Spells (2/1): *alarm, cantrip, detect evil, detect magic, friends*, grease: hold portal, identify, magic missile, protection from evil, read magic, Tenser's floating disc; alter self*, darkness 15' radius, flaming sphere, knock, Melf's acid arrow, shatter*.

Dreen's features include lizard scales, a gnoll's snout and bugbear ears. He has a strong affinity for potions and collects whatever potions he can find.

62. Farene Ravenmoon (W4/h/f: AL NG; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 10, D 15, C 9, I 18, W 12, Ch 16; ML 11; robe, dagger +1, potion of flying, NWP: ancient history (17), etiquette (15), heraldry (18), herbalism +1 (17), Modern languages (18), pottery (13), reading/writing—Common (19) spellcraft +1 (17), weaving (17).

Spells (3/2): *burning hands, charm person*, comprehend languages: detect magic, grease, message, mending, read magic, shocking grasp**; *alter self blur*, detect evil, flaming sphere, invisibility*, irritation, knock, mirror image, rope trick, shatter, wizard lock.*

Farene is self-assured and, at times, arrogant. She's all too willing to contribute her two coins to an argument but refuses to admit when she's wrong.

63. Lothius Arlymbar W4/h/m): AL N; AC 8 (Dexterity) or 4 (with armor spell); MV 12; hp 13; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, D 16, C 9, I 16, W 9, Ch 12; ML 10; dagger, wand of magic detection (33 charges), potion of climbing. NWP: ancient history (15) ancient languages (16), engineering (13), etiquette (12), reading/writing—Common (17), reading/writing—Elvish (17) spellcraft +1 (15).

Spells (3/2): *armor*, audible glamer, cantrip, charm person, detect evil, detect magic, jump, light, magic missile: phantasmal force, read magic, shield*, blindness, continual light, ESP*, flaming sphere, glitterdust, invisibility, mirror image, rope trick, scare, web**.

Lothius is a poor, self-serving henchman. He hesitates to risk his own life and seeks only to increase the size of his spell repertoire.

64. Jaedar Orymbade (W3-invoker/h/m): AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 12, D 13, C 15, I 17, W 11, Ch 15; ML 11; minor staff of spell storing (holds six levels of 1st-3rd level spells, currently *magic missile* x2, *shield, invisibility*), dagger. NWP: agriculture (17), cooking (17), direction sense (12), engineering (14), herbalism (15), reading/writing—Common (18), spellcraft (15).

Spells (3/2): *affect normal fires, burning hands*, color spray, detect magic, feather fall: grease, magic missile: read magic, shield, shocking grasp, unseen servant: flaming sphere*, invisibility, levitate*, pyrotechnics, stinking cloud.*

To Jaedar, nothing's more satisfying than bowling over a band of goblins with a flaming sphere. He's a braggart who revels in his own power and who's quick to point out the usefulness of his spellcasting ability.

65. Shyleen Selfaril (W2—enchanter/he/f): AL LG; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD 30% resistant to charm; S 8, D 14, C 9, I 17, W 13, Ch 17; ML 10; dagger. NWP: animal handling (12), animal training (13), artistic ability—sculpture (13) herbalism (15), reading/writing—Common (18), reading/writing—Elvish (18), riding—land-based (16) singing (17) spellcraft (15).

Spells (3): *change self*, charm person: comprehend languages, detect magic, enlarge, hypnotism, read magic, sleep**, taunt.

Shyleen is very generous, giving her excess coins to street urchins and worthy charities. She is accompanied and protected by her trained war dog, Cutter.

Cutter (Shyleen's war dog): AC 7; MV 15; HD 2+2; hp 12; THAC0 19; #AT 1 bite; Dmg 2d4; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65; MM/57 (dog).

66. Calamaigne Alshar (W1—transmuter/h/m): AL NG; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 12; W1 ; hp 6; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, D 15, C 16, I 16, W 13, Ch 12; ML 9; dagger, walking staff. NWP: ancient history (15) engineering (13), navigation (14) reading/writing—Common (17), riding—land-based (16), rope use (15) seamanship (16) spellcraft (14).

Spells (2): *burning hands, cantrip, comprehend languages*, detect magic, enlarge, jump, read magic, shocking grasp:*

Calamaigne likes women, is easily distracted by them, and prefers their company to the lonely life of the studious mage. He is lazy and always feigns weakness or injury to get others to carry around his equipment

67. Miroun Rulthan (W4/h/m): AL NG; AC 5 (armor spell, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 14; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 10, D 15, C 11, I 17, W 12, Ch 13; ML 14; wand of magic missiles (19 charges), dagger. NWP: ancient history (16), astrology (17) engineering (14), gem cutting (13), reading/writing—Common (18), riding—land-based (15) spellcraft (15).

Spells (3/2): *audible glamer, armor: burning hands: charm person, detect*

magic, grease: jump, magic missile, mending, phantasmal force: read magic, shocking grasp; bind, detect invisibility, ESP, fog cloud, invisibility*, knock*, ray of enfeeblement, wizard lock.*

Miroun is a shady, quiet-spoken mage with a white, skunk-like stripe through his jet-black hair. He uses adventuring as a means of collecting spell components.

68. Tiara Elleander W3—enchanter/he/f): AL CG; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 11; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD 30% resistant to charm; S 9, D 15, C 11, I 17, W 11, Ch 17; ML 12; dagger. NWP: agriculture (17) brewing (17) heraldry (17), herbalism (15) navigation (15), reading/writing—Common (18), reading/writing—Elvish (18), seamanship (16), spellcraft (15).

Spells (3/2): *cantrip, charm person: comprehend languages: detect magic, enlarge, friends, protection from evil, read magic, spook*, taunt; blur: forget, hypnotic pattern*, levitate, locate object, misdirection, strength, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter.*

Tiara is drawn to strong, handsome fighters and will join only bands that include at least one charismatic, combat-minded male. This cuddly kitten of a woman pretends not to notice the attention afforded her and often plays "hard to get."

69. Rhant Aelan (W2—abjurer/h/m): AL CG; AC 10; MV 12; hp 6; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1 or 3; Dmg by weapon type; S 12, D 9, C 12, I 15, W 15, Ch 11; ML 12; dagger, six darts. NWP: engineering (12) etiquette (11), herbalism (13) Modern languages (15), reading/writing—Common (16), riding—land-based (14) spellcraft (13), swimming (12).

Spells (3): *alarm, cantrip, chill touch*, detect magic*, detect undead, read magic, protection from evil**.

Rhant is fascinated by the lizard man culture and collects various totems and icons from that race, including his prized lizard man darts.

70. Azure Jhessail (W2—conjuror/h/f): AL LG; AC 4 (armor spell, Dexterity); MV 12; W2; hp 9; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 16, C 15, I 16, W 9, Ch 14; ML 12; staff, dagger. NWP: ancient history (15) cooking (16), dancing (16) herbalism (13) pottery (14) reading/writing—Common (17), reading/writing—Orcish (17), spellcraft (14).

Spells (3): *armor**, *cantrip*, *change self*, *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *find familiar*, *grease**, *mount*, *read magic*, *unseen servant**, *wizard mark*.

Azure is not a subtle schemer, preferring the direct approach. She has a playful, taunting nature and prefers to outwit foes rather than skewer them. She speaks Orcish fluently, knows the Orcish culture, and enjoys the company of half-orcs.

71. Kilipik the Dwindledweomer (W1—illusionist/gn/m): AL LG; AC 8 (Dexterity); MV 6; W1; hp 5; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +4 to saves vs. magic; S 14, D 16, C 15, I 17, W 12, Ch 12; ML 13; dagger, hand crossbow. NWP: ancient languages (17), engineering (14), gem cutting (14), herbalism (15), Modern languages (17), reading/writing—Common (17), reading/writing—Gnomish (17), spellcraft (15).

Spells (2): *audible glamer**, *cantrip*, *color spray*, *light*, *mending*, *Nystul's magic aura*, *phantasmal force**, *read magic*, *ventriloquism*.

Kilipik is very talkative and speaks with a pronounced lisp. One of his favorite defensive tactics is to cast a phantasmal force spell of a rock or pedestal around himself, effectively concealing his presence.

72. Thaun Argul (W2/h/m): ALN; AC 10; MV 12; W2; hp 6; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1 or 3; Dmg by weapon type; S 12, D 12, C 9, I 18, W 13, Ch 9; ML 16; dagger, three darts. NWP: ancient history (17), ancient languages (18), astrology (18), engineering (15), leatherworking (18), Modern languages (18), navigation (16), reading/writing—Common (19), reading/writing—Elvish (19), spellcraft (16).

Spells (2): *affect normal fires*, *burning hands*, *charm person*, *detect magic*, *gaze reflection*, *magic missile*, *read magic*, *shocking grasp**, *spider climb*, *wall of fog*.

Thaun was left on the doorstep of a kind leatherworker who raised him as a son. Thaun has recently left home to seek glory and fame as a mighty wizard.

73. Traemor Xultroun (W1—invoker/h/m): AL LE; AC 9 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 6; THAC0 21 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 6, D 15, C 16, I 16, W 14, Ch 8; ML 9; dagger. NWP: ancient history (15), ancient languages (16), appraising (16), heraldry (16), Modern languages (16), reading/writing—Common (17), riding—land-based (17), spellcraft (14).

Spells (1): *cantrip*, *chill touch*, *detect magic*, *magic missile*, *read magic*, *shield*, *Tenser's floating disc**.

Traemor seems pleasant and agreeable. He uses this facade to ingratiate himself to groups of treasure-seekers, hoping to snatch more than his fair share.

74. Aerween Shanalon (W1—transmuter/he/f): AL LG; AC 7 (Dexterity); MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 2; Dmg by weapon type; SD 30% resistant to *charm*; S 14, D 17, C 9, I 17, W 13, Ch 15; ML 10; staff, dagger. NWP: astrology (17), etiquette (15), heraldry (17), herbalism (15), riding—airborne (11), riding—land-based (16), spellcraft (15), swimming (14).

Spells (2): *change self*, *charm person*, *color spray*, *enlarge*, *feather fall**, *hold portal*, *mending*, *read magic*, *shocking grasp**.

Aerween is especially fond of elves and enjoys their company. She has sweet, cherubic face that comes in handy when she's asking for information.

75. Gharr Lharaethe (W2/F2/he/m): AL NG; AC 5 (armor spell, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SA two-weapon style specialization; SD 30% resistant to *charm*; S 15, D 15, C 11, I 16, W 12, Ch 13; ML 12; long sword, short sword, composite long bow. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), bowyer/fletcher (14), herbalism (14), reading/writing—Elvish (17), riding—land-based (15), survival—forest (16).

Spells (2): *armor**, *change self*, *detect magic*, *feather fall**, *hold portal*, *message*, *read magic*, *sleep*, *taunt*.

Gharr requires only four hours of sleep, after which he can memorize spells without penalty. He is extraordinarily alert, receiving a +1 bonus to surprise rolls.

76. Dhauna Sanshoon (WG/h/f): AL N; AC 8 (*cloak of protection* +2; first attack always misses); MV 12; hp 25; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 10, C 16, I 17, W 8, Ch 10; ML 13; *wand of frost* (24 charges), *ring of warmth*, *cloak of protection* +2 (affords +2 to saves), dagger. NWP: ancient history (16), astrology (17), endurance (16), reading/writing—Common (18), riding—land-based (11), spellcraft +1 (16), swimming (13).

Spells (4/2/2): *affect normal fires*, *burning hands*, *chill touch**, *comprehend languages*, *detect magic*, *enlarge**, *identify*, *jump*, *mount**, *read magic*, *shocking grasp**, *alter self*, *blindness*, *irritation*,

knock, *Melf's acid arrow**, *scare*, *spectral hand**, *strength*; *clairvoyance*, *feign death*, *fireball*, *hold person*, *lightning bolt**, *protection from normal missiles**, *slow*, *water breathing*.

Dhauna enjoys sordid company and makes friends easily among barbarians and rogues. She's forthright, demanding, and loyal to no one but herself.

77. Phaela Zanth (W1—necromancer/h/f): AL N; AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 13, C 12, I 18; W 16, Ch 14; ML 12; black shroud cape, silver dagger. NWP: ancient history (17), ancient languages (18) cobbling (13), cooking (18), herbalism (16), reading/writing—Common (19), religion (16), spellcraft +1 (17), weaving (17).

Spells (2): *burning hands*, *cantrip*, *chill touch**, *detect magic*, *detect undead*, *light*, *shield*, *spider climb*, *summon Igor** (personalized version of *unseen servant*).

Phaela likes to poke and prod mouldering corpses, identifying various obscure bones in whatever rotting mass she finds. Her preoccupation with dead things is unsettling, but she balances her sordid indulgences with surprisingly good cheer.

78. Ulrym the Shady (W2/h/m): AL N; AC 10; MV 12; hp 7; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 12, D 10, C 9, I 14, W 11, Ch 7; ML 9; bone dagger (Dmg 1d3). NWP: ancient history (13), brewing (14), cooking (14), Modern languages (14), reading/writing—Common (15), spellcraft +1 (13) swimming (12).

Ulrym lacked the skills to become a full-fledged necromancer, but he dresses in drab clothing and prefers spells from the school of necromancy. He has a snyad companion named P'zab who likes stealing valuable items. Ulrym does not discourage P'zab's thievery if it means acquiring something valuable.

P'zab (snyad): INT low (7); AL N; AC -4; MV 21; HD 1-1; hp 3; THAC0 20; #AT nil; Dmg nil; SD +3 to saves vs. non-area-effect spells; SZ T (2' tall); ML 9; XP 65; MM/175 (gremlin).

79. Xuldra Kasaltarr (P2/h/f): AL NG; AC 5 (scale mail, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 10; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+0/+1), D 15, C 8, I 13, W 17, Ch 15; ML 13; scale mail, footman's mace, holy symbol. NWP: healing (15), herbalism (11), local history (15), reading/writing—Common (14) religion (17). Spells (4).

Xuldra deplores wizards and their foul magic—the result of several unpleasant encounters. She insults most wizards she meets, usually provoking conflict.

80. Skobral Saerlask (P2/h/m): AL LN; AC 3 (splint mail, shield); MV 12; hp 17; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+0/+1), D 11, C 16, I 12, W 16, Ch 14; ML 14; splint mail, shield, footman's mace, holy symbol. NWP: fire-building (15), fishing (15), healing (14), religion (16), riding—land-based (19), weather sense (15). Spells (4).

Skobral enjoys the outdoors more than the bustling city. He sees adventuring as a way to get away from the strict regimen of the clergy while spreading his faith.

81. Ceremon Truthspeaker (P4/h/m): AL LG; AC 2 (chain mail, shield); MV 12; hp 29; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 12, C 14, I 15, W 17, Ch 15; ML 16; chain mail, shield, footman's flail, holy symbol. NWP: healing (13), heraldry (15), herbalism (13), local history (15), reading/writing—Common (16), religion (17). Spells (5/4).

Ceremon is noble, but not naive. He believes evil must be exterminated, not cured. Those he regards as enemies are shown no mercy in battle.

82. Glaeve Rhostarr (P3/h/f): AL CG; AC (scale mail, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 20; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 16, C 13, I 12, W 15, Ch 12; ML 15; scale mail, footman's mace, sling, 20 stones, holy symbol. NWP: agriculture (12), healing (13), herbalism (10), reading/writing—Common (13), religion (15). Spells (4/2).

Glaeve is haughty and arrogant, preferring to do things her own way. Those who know her walk on eggshells in her presence, wary of her abrasive nature.

83. Brella Mirinthus (P2/he/f): AL LG; AC 5 (scale mail, shield); MV 12; hp 12; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type: SD 30% resistant to charm; S 13, D 12, C 12, I 11, W 18, Ch 12; ML 12; scale mail, shield, quarterstaff, holy symbol, three vials of holy water, NWP: animal handling (17), animal training (18), healing (16), reading/writing—Elvish (12), religion (18).

Brella is cheerful, always doing her utmost to keep the spirits of her companions high. Her presence raises the morale of other good-aligned henchmen by 1.

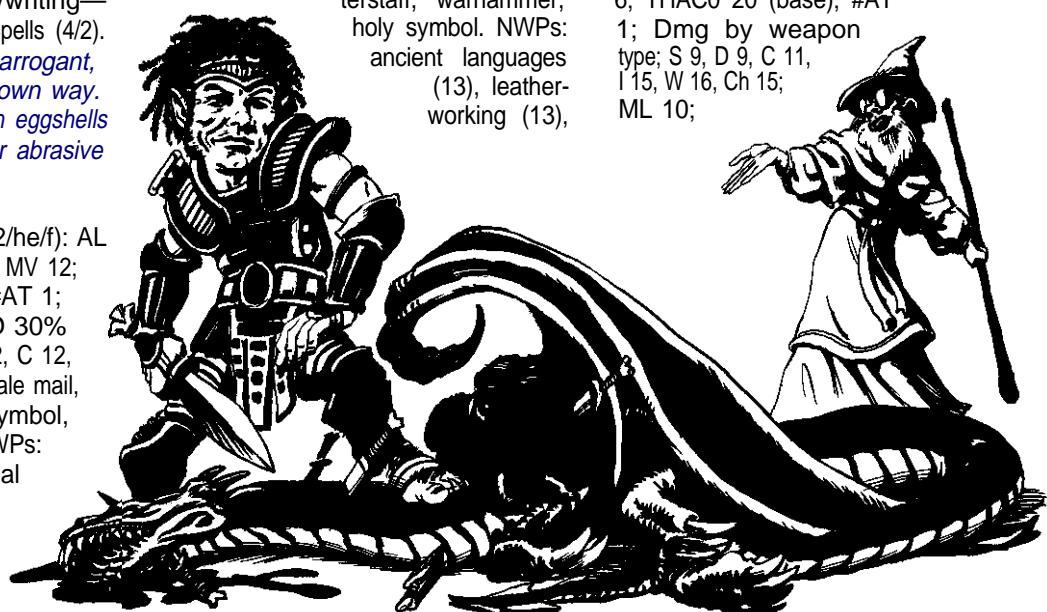
84. Brynn Lengareth (P3/h/rn): AL LG; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+0/+1), D 10, C 11, I 9, W 15, Ch 14; ML 15; chain mail, warhammer, sling, 20 stones, holy symbol, two vials of holy water. NWP: direction sense (16), healing (13), reading/writing—Common (10), religion (15) swimming (16). Spells (4/2).

Brynn turns undead as a cleric two levels higher—a boon granted to him by his deity. Brynn delights in smiting evildoers with his hammer, the head of which is shaped like a dragon's head.

85. Jiri Willowtree (P2/ha/f): AL LG; AC 7 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 6; hp 12; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 13, D 15, C 12, I 12, W 15, Ch 12; ML 11; leather armor, footman's mace, sling, 20 bullets, holy symbol, healer's bag. NWP: agriculture (12), healing (13), herbalism (10), local history (12), reading/writing—Common (13). Spells (4).

Jiri seems too meek to chastise others for wrongdoings, but she's surprisingly temperamental and fiercely reliable in combat.

86. Laethor Maun (P3/ho/m): AL LN; AC 3 (chain mail, shield, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17 (+1/+1), D 15, C 10, I 13, W 17, Ch 13; ML 15; chain mail, shield, quarterstaff, warhammer, holy symbol. NWP: ancient languages (13), leatherworking (13),



local history (13), reading/writing—Common (14), reading/writing—Orcish (14), religion (17), riding—land-based (20). Spells (4/3).

Laethor was brought to his temple as a child—a prisoner of war taken from his orcish mother—and raised by the clergy as a champion of the faith.

87. Varagon Sunbright (P3/h/m): AL LG; AC 2 (plate mail, shield); MV 12; hp 19; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 17 (+1/+1), D 8, C 16, I 14, W 17, Ch 16; ML 15; plate mail, shield, holy symbol, footman's mace, potion of healing, vial of holy water. NWP: artistic ability—sketching (17), astrology (14), healing (15), herbalism (12), riding—land-based (20). Spells (4/3).

Varagon is a man of high ethics and noble values, quick to point out the flaws of society and happy to make suggestions for improvement at the risk of sounding pretentious.

88. Theleska Ceryl (P2/hu/f): AL CG; AC 3 (banded mail, shield); MV 12; hp 10; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 14, D 12, C 12, I 10, W 18, Ch 17; ML 12; banded mail, shield, footman's flail, holy symbol. NWP: healing (16) musical instrument-lyre (11), riding—land-based (21), seafanship (13), weather sense (17). Spells (4).

Theleska does not take orders or criticism well, always challenging authority and questioning instructions and never admitting when she is wrong.

89. Astor Elaazrin (P1/h/m): AL NG; AC 4 (chain mail, shield); MV 12; hp 6; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 9, D 9, C 11, I 15, W 16, Ch 15; ML 10;

chain mail, shield, footman's mace, holy symbol. NWP: brewing (15), cooking +1 (16), etiquette (15), heraldry (15), herbalism (13), reading/writing—Common (16). Spells (3).

Astor is a portly fellow with discriminating food tastes who'd rather starve than eat iron rations. Young ladies find his proud girth and haughty manner strangely attractive.

90. Irzoul Agatehammer (P1/d/m): AL LG; AC 3 (chain mail, shield, Dexterity); MV 6; hp 10; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +4 to saves vs. poison and magic; S 15, D 15, C 16, I 7, W 16, Ch 13; ML 11; chain mail, shield, warhammer. NWP: blacksmithing (15), brewing (15), healing (14), religion (16). Spells (3).

Irzoul knows an ancient dwarven healing ritual that uses the healing power of song. If he makes a successful singing proficiency check, Irzoul can heal 1d2 hp damage to every friendly creature within 30 feet (usable once/day).

91. Variel A matarr

(P1/h/f): AL NE; AC 5 (chain mail); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+0/+1), D 9, C 17, I 10, W 17, Ch 11; ML 13; chain mail, footman's mace, holy symbol. NWP: healing (15), religion (17), reading/writing—Common (11), riding—land-based (20), weather sense (16). Spells (3).

Variel poses as a cleric of a neutral-good faith, using others to help spread the faith and teachings of her wicked deity. Once per day, she can touch someone and inflict them with a curse (as per the reversed first-level bless spell).

92. Draegen Blaskarp (F3/P2/d/m): AL CN; AC 3 (splint mail, shield); MV 6; hp 25; THAC0 18 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD +5 to save vs. poison and magic; S 18/34 (+1/+3), D 13, C 17, I 13, W 17, Ch 7; ML 16; splint mail, battle axe, warhammer. NWP: armorer (11), endurance (17), healing (15), reading/writing—Dwarvish (14). Spells (4).

Draegen is abrasive and obnoxious.

He can whip himself into a berserker rage, gaining +2 to hit and damage rolls but suffering a -4 AC penalty.

93. Keldor Farazyi (F2/P2/d/m): AL CG; AC 7 (leather armor, shield); MV 12; hp 19; THAC0 19 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 16 (+0/+1), D 14, C 15, I 12, W 15, Ch 11; ML 13; leather armor, shield, hand axe, sling, 20 bullets. NWP: blind-fighting (n/a), healing (13), local history (11), mountaineering (n/a), stonemasonry (14). Spells (4).

Kieran plays the merrymaking buffoon to conceal his thievery; money purloined by Kieran goes straight into his temple's coffers, minus a token sum for himself.

96. Diajani Innabryl (B2/he/f): AL NG; AC 6 (leather armor, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 14; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; SD 30% resistant to charm spells; S 12, D 16, C 15, I 13, W 15, Ch 16; ML 11; CW 60%, DN 25%, PP 25%, RL 15%; leather armor, short sword, short bow, 18 arrows, zither. NWP: bowyer/fletcher (15), musical instrument—zither (15), reading/writing—Common (14), reading/writing—Elvish (14), riding—land-based (18) spellcraft (11).

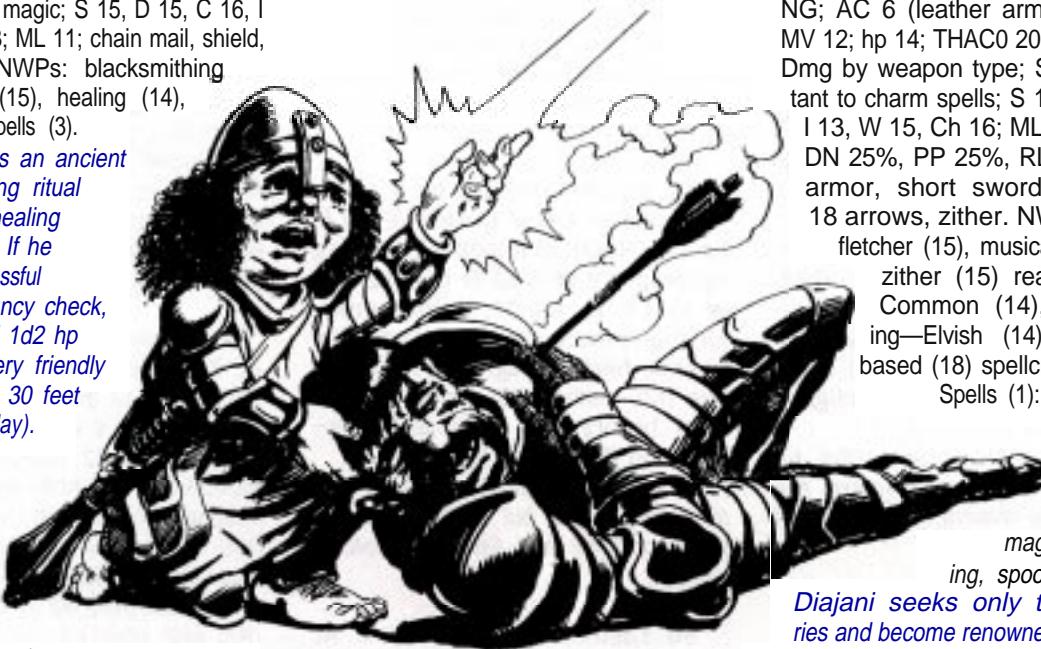
Spells (1): *dancing lights, feather fall, grease, jump: Nystul's magic aura, mending, spook, ventriloquism.*

Diajani seeks only to share stories and become renowned in some fashion. She is beautiful yet crafty, using her beauty and diplomacy to stay clear of harm's way.

97. Allistrus Melindor (B1/h/m): AL LN; AC 6 (studded leather armor, Dexterity); MV 12; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, D 15, C 9, I 13, W 9, Ch 15; ML 9; CW 55%, DN 25%, PP 20%, RL 5%; studded leather armor, sling, 12 bullets, dagger, mandolin. NWP: appraising (13), dancing (15), disguise (14), musical instrument—mandolin (14), reading/writing—Common (14) singing (15). Spells: none.

Allistrus is the cautious aristocrat—not cowardly, exactly, but concerned about his own welfare. He's a penny-pincher and charlatan out to fatten his purse.

98. Seren Loreweaver (doppelganger): AL N; AC 5; MV 9; HD 4; hp 21; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d12 or by weapon type; SA surprise; SD limited ESP, saves as F10; MR immune to sleep



Keldor complains incessantly. He complains about the weather, he complains about the mud in his boots—anything worth complaining about.

94. Waunthuar Jlendeth (F1/P1/he/m): AL LG; AC 4 (chain mail, shield); MV 12; hp 8; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; 30% resistant to charm; S 17 (+1/+1), D 12, C 11, I 12, W 15, Ch 13; ML 14; chain mail, shield, footman's flail, holy symbol. NWP: animal lore (12) fire-building (14), local history (13), navigation (10), religion (15) seamanship (13), swimming (17). Spells (3).

Waunthuar enjoys the sea and has a special kinship with intelligent, good-aligned, sea-dwelling creatures (equivalent to a -3 reaction adjustment bonus).

95. Kieran Snuffpot (T2/P1/gn/m): AL NC; AC 5 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 1 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 9; THAC0 20 (base); #AT 1; Dmg by

and charm spells; SZ M; ML 14; MM/60; plumed hat, piccolo, short sword.

"Seren" impersonates a human bard. The doppleganger ingratiates himself to strangers with his knowledge of local lore and his familiarity with the surroundings. He uses his shapeshifting ability to finagle treasure from the strangers before making good his escape. He has no musical talent.

99. Thomas o' Shaelee (B1/h/m): AL NG; AC 10 or 6 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 5; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type +1 (strength); S 16, D 12, C 12, I 15, W 6, Ch 15; ML 11; CW 50%, DN 30%, PP 15%, RL 10%; leather vest (no AC protection), light crossbow, long sword, flute. NWPs: ancient languages (15), etiquette (15), heraldry (15), musical instrument—flute (11), reading/writing—Common (16), singing (15) tumbling (12).

Spells: none.

Thorn is happy-go-lucky and prone to getting himself into life-threatening scrapes. He has a winsome obliviousness that others find peculiar yet charming.

100. Madeleine von Essell (B3/h/f): AL NG; AC 7 (*cloak of protection* +1, Dexterity) or 3 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 15; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; S 11, D 16, C 12, I 16, W 13, Ch 16; ML 12; CW 70%, DN 30%, PP 40%, RL 10%; *cloak of protection* +1, dagger. NWPs: animal handling (11), etiquette (16), heraldry (16) local history (16) reading/writing—Common (17), reading/writing—Elvish (17), singing (16), tumbling (16).

Spells (2): *audible glamer, cantrip, change self*, color spray, dancing lights, detect magic, jump, message, read magic, sleep, ventriloquism, wall of fog.*

Madeleine is the daughter of a wealthy lord, but she prefers to travel in cognito, telling lies of her background. Her parents and siblings generally disapprove of her chosen profession, but she has no intention of changing for their benefit.

101. Launir Netherander (B1/he/m): AL LN; AC4 (leather armor, Dexterity) or 0 (when tumbling); MV 12; hp 6; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon

type; SA two-weapon style specialization; 30% resistant to *charm*; S 14, D 18, C 12, I 15, W 11, Ch 17; ML 15; CW 55%, DN 20%, PP 30%, RL 10%; leather armor, long bow, long sword, short sword, lute. NWPs: appraising (15), disguise (16) juggling (17), musical instrument—lute (17) reading/writing—Common (16) singing (17), tumbling (18).

Spells: none.

Launir has denied his elven heritage, blaming his elven mother for abandoning him and his human father. He treats elves poorly in general. When confronted by elves, he and his comrades suffer a +4 reaction adjustment.



Chris would rather be a super hero than a henchman, but he'd sooner be a henchman than the love slave of the kobold queen.

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The Dragon Unseen

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by Storn Cook

Somewhere east of Waterdeep
lurks *The Dragon Unseen*.
Silent now his claws they creep
Rending all;
Bodies fall,
Watched by eyes of green
Orbs of patient death,
Sleepless they gleam
Above slaying breath
And jaws of thunder;
Smashing foes under
To further a bloody dream.

MANY HAVE CHANTED those grim lines over a kindling fire in the Sword Coast North, because doing so is supposed to ward off beasts who see the blaze from afar. Most minstrels think "The Dragon Unseen" is no more than an impressive warning phrase, a clever bardic creation . . . but bards—

and all too many corpses—have found the truth to be very different.

Malaeragoth the Unseen is a wily male sapphire dragon—"very old" as humans measure the years of dragons—who is rarely seen outside his lair. He lurks in its depths, devouring creatures of the Underdark (drow warbands, for example) who endlessly blunder into the caverns he calls home. He plots as he paces in the darkness, scheming out how-without ever leaving his caverns—he can achieve covert control over the pitiful but potentially dangerous human organization known as the Cult of the Dragon.

Once Malaeragoth served the wizard Uvakhur the Undaunted as an occasional steed. It was a partnership he enjoyed, for he never ventured out

into the sunlit skies of the surface world unless he had Uvakhur on his back. The sardonic young mage was an expert guide who didn't mind taking detours to show his curious aerial steed scorching deserts or frigid wastes.

Uvakhur was the son of a rich Sembian merchant, much enmeshed in the intrigues of the wealthy merchants of that land. As his enemies grew, his need for swift journeys grew with it, and he called on Malaeragoth often. He didn't seem to mind that the dragon beneath him took close and persistent interest in spellbooks and the occasional magics Uvakhur unleashed.

Over the years, Malaeragoth learned a little about spells, a little more about the use and handling of

magical items, and much about Sembian politics and the players in its frenetic and rather dirty games, which Uvakhur especially hated.

The Cult of the Dragon, for instance. They were forever hounding young wizards to join the Cult or at least to lend it magical assistance . . . or else face the "righteous and justified wrath" of the Followers of the Scaly Way. Regardless of a mageling's reaction, they spread the word that he or she was now a loyal Cult member, and all Cultists could call on the mageling for aid or sponsorship—and any refusal would make the mageling subject to Cult justice.

It's expensive to be a mage in Sembia. Well, it's expensive to be just about anyone in Sembia, but the training and components involved in spell-casting restrict wizardry to the very wealthy or the duly accomplished. That meant most of the rising mages were young nobles (that is, the sons of established wealthy merchant families).

The Cult of the Dragon, on the other hand, was largely composed of ambitious non-nobles; clawing at every mage in sight was a good way of weakening the influence of the nobility and increasing the reputation of the Cult. It was also a good way to make enemies—but if your foes fear you, you can often force them to react in certain ways, giving you a measure of control over them. And as Uvakhur put it, "the Sembian Cultists love every measure of control they can squeeze out of Faerûn around them."

There came a summer morning when Uvakhur, no longer young, was attacked in his manor house in northern Sembia by bold Cultists bent on plunder and punishment. The battle that followed brought death to many, but after the Undaunted had been hacked apart on his best carpet at the heart of his spell-chambers, enough Cultists remained alive to shout victorious triumph to the skies and loot all the magical items and spellbooks they could find.

Unfortunately for their continued health, they lingered too long over intricate sliding panels and the wine bottles in the ambries behind some of them, thinking that Uvakhur's last cries had been vain entreaties and not a summons to the only ally he could call.

When Malaeragoth plunged down out of the sky, he saw at once what had happened and tore what was left

of the manor apart as a child tears open the wrappings of a gift to reach the Cultists within.

What he left of the ruined manor house still stands, overgrown by its orchards, northwest of Saerb. Its riven walls have been further despoiled over the years by scavengers in search of magic, but phantom wizards and leucrotta have kept casual explorers away. There's not much left for even the most diligent seeker to find, anyway; Malaeragoth bore away from House Undaunted chests of potions and books, a cabinet full of scrolls, all the items from which he'd recalled seeing Uvakhur unleash magic . . . and a powerful hatred of the Cult of the Dragon.

The rest of that summer, the sapphire wyrm indulged his rage, hunting down Cultists across Sembia to avenge his sometime master. That ended one autumn night when he was burned and blasted by the frantic spells of three Cult wizards working together. Their magics sent him rolling into a pond, his lashing tail inadvertently flicking barrels of oil into fires ignited in battle. The explosion that followed tore apart the Cult stronghold he'd attacked, sent smoke rising to the stars, and hurled two of his mage foes to their deaths, broken on the stones of the walled manor where they'd made their stand. None saw the wounded dragon crawl out of the pond and up a rocky slope.

The journey back to his lair was long and painful, and Malaeragoth vowed he'd never stand against wizards in open battle again. As he lay healing and trying to master magic in the dark caverns of his lair, he used Uvakhur's scrying-mirror to watch Cult members and their doings, and he vowed revenge upon them all.

Yet his wounds were great, and they kept him idle in the dark for months. Nor did the learning of magic go swiftly, though he found that he understood magic and could divine ways to reshape it to his bidding. It occurred to him, as he lay upon his bed of coins, that he was the very thing diligent Cultists went seeking. To draw them to him was too risky; he'd be inviting a battle into his home, and abandoning all safety and privacy forever. Perhaps he could act as the senior Cultists did, issuing orders and sending one group of agents to spy on another . . .

Malaeragoth set about trying to manipulate the Cult into serving him, and he found that it worked. At first he merely sent them to a variety of fiendish traps for his own amusement. Later he realized that the surviving Cultists could do useful things for him, carrying out tasks a dragon couldn't, sparing him the danger of long travel away from his lair.

His early attempts proved so successful that the Unseen Dragon set to work in earnest on learning impersonations, mind-reading and mind-controlling spells, and the workings of human society (and the desires and characters of humans) in the North. Thus he trained to control Cult members without their being aware of his manipulation.

He succeeded with ridiculous ease. Almost disbelieving, he set additional schemes in motion and watched them succeed. Cult members were indeed too chaotic for words.

As he set to work to master magic, Malaeragoth found himself with two pastimes: reshaping his lair and manipulating the Cult. Over the years since, he has largely altered his lair to the way he wants it. Influencing the Cult has progressed to the point where he can see his way clear to controlling it eventually.

Nowadays, Malaeragoth prides himself on leaving no hints to his identity when he destroys Cult members, and on wiping out all tracing spells that might find him by means of the treasure he seizes. Cult members are only now aware that someone or something that does not like them is at work in an area roughly bounded by Scornubel to The Shining Falls, and The Lonely Moor to Uluvín—but as yet none of them knows it is a dragon.

Malaeragoth takes an almost child-like glee in misleading Cultists as to his true nature and in deftly increasing his influence over them; covertly achieving control of the Cult has become his great passion and entertainment.

More often whispered of in the Underdark than on the surface of Faerûn, Malaeragoth takes delight not in an impressive reputation (as most wyrms do) but in remaining hidden and unknown, truly Unseen. He avoids even the company of his own kind, hiding to avoid unnecessary contact. He has a natural aptitude for and grasp of magic, and he knows the

general topography of Faerûn from aloft. He is otherwise ignorant of much lore, and his scrying of surface society is almost entirely concerned with the intrigues of Sembia and the activities of the Cult of the Dragon.

Malaeragoth is itching to make use of his knowledge of the Realm of Rolling Coins by means of investments, but he lacks an agent he can trust and doesn't want to spend time away from his caverns—though he can assume the shape and manners of Sembian merchants with uncanny accuracy, should he be moved to do so. When adventuring bands or exploring dragons come seeking him, he often successfully masquerades as a lost, wandering human in need of their aid—until the right moment to attack with his full draconic form and powers.

Watching and scheming consume his days. Through years spent in this way, Malaeragoth has developed patience and a sense of humor. The hot rising springs that run through his lair slake his thirst, and he dines on creatures of the Underdark who intrude on his lair, flocks of wildfowl who alight to sleep on the High Moor (scrying them, he swoops on them by night, awakening them and gulping huge numbers in the air as they flutter aloft in a huge mass), and the creatures produced by eight captive deepspawn that he keeps walled away in a network of mushroom-bedizened caverns that he opens only to enter and feed.

Malaeragoth's Lair

The Unseen dwells in a huge network of caverns beneath the Graypeak Mountains. Some of these subterranean chambers are natural, bringing hot and foaming streams up from the depths to join the River Shining. Others are the halls and passages of a long-abandoned dwarvish delve, its short and narrow ways blasted to larger tunnels by the spells of the Unseen. Trap pits and chasms are commonplace, and once-rough walls have been scoured and worn smooth by the passing bulk of the dragon who now rules here, stretching often like a gigantic and restless scaled cat but seldom emerging into the world beyond what he calls his "Realm of Stone and Shadow."

Malaeragoth keeps several "arms," dead-end strings of caverns walled off

with huge rocks, for special purposes. One such arm is flooded, holding reserve water. Another is lit by the endless, silent flashes of many nidulant gems: the much-prized beljurils.

Scrying mirrors drift slowly along the passages of the Realm of Stone and Shadow, like upright oval stone shields, their soft green-white surfaces flickering. Malaeragoth uses them to spy on the world outside, regularly scanning the lands around his lair, but bending the major part of his attention upon distant Sembia and the deeds of the Cult of the Dragon, wherever he detects or follows them.

Skeletons and zombies fetch and carry at Malaeragoth's bidding. If his lair is attacked by large groups of beings, he'll direct these undead to roll waiting, massed crushing boulders down on invaders in particular shafts or areas. The undead are otherwise walled away in unlit side-caverns to keep them out of the way of the Unseen Dragon's slow pacings. He enjoys solitude and taking slow walks through the caverns worn smooth by years of his passage, as he murmurs thoughts, comments, and unfolding schemes aloud (although he'll never do so when he knows guests are anywhere in his lair) and watches a scrying-mirror that's drifting along with him.

Malaeragoth has no other servitors or allies, although he sometimes poses as this or that human and uses his scrying-mirror to seek advice from various distant surface folk (or to manipulate them with offers of deals or the real or false news he imparts).

Malaeragoth's Domain

Save for his extensive lair "Realm," Malaeragoth claims and patrols no territory but considers himself free to travel at will around surface Faerûn. He won't hesitate to fight if he encounters anyone barring or disputing his way on his rare forays out "under the sun." He does keep watch over the approaches to his lair, both on the surface and in the Underdark, having developed an intense dislike of surprise guests and visitations.

The Deeds of Malaeragoth

Malaeragoth eats and drinks as he sees the need, taking no delight in devourings or hunting. He hates no dragons nor anyone beyond Cult members, but he feels no need to take

a mate or maintain friendships with dragons or other beings.

The dealings of merchants fascinate Malaeragoth, and he never tires of observing them. He hungers to take an ever-greater hand in secretly "steering" events in whatever direction he desires. First, make the Cult of the Dragon his unwitting puppets, then begin to manipulate factions and individuals—everyone except priests and mages who might well detect him—in realms everywhere across Faerûn . . .

Malaeragoth's Magic

Some of the wands that the Unseen Dragon salvaged from House Undaunted are rare and powerful acid-hurling death wands; the same sort of weapon possessed by the dragon Lhammaruntosz. Whereas the Claws of the Coast commands (so far as is known) only one such item, Malaeragoth owns at least four. This may well be the largest collection of this sort of wand anywhere; Elminster says very few such weapons still exist due to their inherent instability.

Gulkuluster's Death Wand

Named for its long-ago Halruaan creator, this wand creates a 20'-radius explosive burst of acidic vapor (akin to a *fireball* spell) up to 240 feet away. All items (including magic items and armor) touched by any part of the vapor must save vs. acid or corrode away entirely, being reduced to flecks and tiny motes of matter over the next 3 rounds.

All beings touched by any part of the vapor suffer 8d6 hp corrosive damage on the round of contact and an additional 4d6 hp on the following round. A target is allowed a single saving throw vs. spells for half damage on both rounds, but damage is never lessened by armor or other worn or carried items, regardless of what the acid does, or fails to do, to them.

The *death wand* cannot be recharged. Whenever it is used, there is an 8% chance of its shattering (identical explosive effects come into being at both the wand and its chosen target locale; the wand wielder suffers full acid-burst damage with no saving throw allowed, and the wand itself is vaporized). There's also a 1 in 8 chance of a "backlash" effect occurring whenever the wand is fired but doesn't shatter. In such cases, the

wand functions normally but also douses its wielder with a tiny jet of acidic vapor that deals 1d6+1 hp damage on the first round and 1d4 damage on the second (no saving throw allowed).

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

The Unseen Dragon has managed to develop several interesting spells from the tomes he took from the ruins of his master's house; three of the most interesting of these magics follow. Due to his research (into spells beyond his present capabilities, in particular), Malaeragoth's understanding and recognition of spells cast by other creatures is extensive.

Ball of Fangs

(Evocation)

Level: 3

Range: 60 yds.

Components: V

Duration: Instantaneous

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: 10'-radius globe

Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell brings into being a whirling ball of flashing, translucent magical force. It actually turns the air momentarily into solid, razor-edged planes. The *ball of fangs* flashes (at MV 22) in a straight line to any spot within range chosen by the caster, affecting all creatures it strikes, and then abruptly fades away. Targets who come into contact with any part of a *ball of fangs* are slashed for 3d6+2 hp damage unless they successfully save vs. spell, whereupon damage is reduced to 1d8+2 hp.

Breathbarb

(Evocation)

Level: 3

Range: 12 yds.

Components: V

Duration: Varies

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

This spell requires a use of the dragon's breath weapon immediately after casting and transforms its cone of effect into a glittering, many-faceted, spindle-shaped crystal five feet long and just over a foot in diameter (like a gigantic, colorless gemstone) that whirls out to the full extent of the breath weapon's affect. If the crystal strikes anything solid during

this flight, it will shatter amid spectacular sparks but inflicts no damage, and both this spell and the breath weapon effect are lost. Otherwise, it reaches the full extent of the breath weapon, halts, and floats in midair, spinning and whirling.

The *breathbarb* can freely be handled and moved by its caster without being affected in any way, but if touched by any other creature, it vanishes with a flash, visiting its effects (the normal manifestation—and usual damage—of the breath weapon) on the creature that disturbed it. Any number of *breathbarb* crystals can be created and positioned so as to block doorways or other areas, but they can't be made to strike each other, mesh together, or occupy the same space.

Various spells concerned with radiance (such as *light*, *faerie fire*, and *continual light*) can be cast into *breathbarb* crystals to make them glow, but no other spells have any effect on these crystals except *dispel magic* (which causes a breath weapon cone discharge from the disintegrating crystal in the direction that the dispel was cast from). Missile attacks on the crystals and contact with solid items that aren't (or aren't wielded by) a living or undead creature have no effect on *breathbarb* crystals.

Crystals created by means of this spell last for one month per level (or draconic age number; e.g., "very old" equals 9) of the caster, and in the final month of their existence slow their whirling and grow visibly smaller; if activated during this time, they deal only half damage. They vanish silently and abruptly at the end of their last month of existence, dissipating without effect.

Sapphire Shield

(Evocation)

Level: 4

Range: 60 yds.

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 1

Area of Effect: One creature

Saving Throw: Neg.

This spell cloaks one chosen being in a flickering sapphire-hued aura, unless the target successfully saves vs. the spell, in which case the magic collapses and fails. A saving throw must be made regardless of the target's wishes.

A *sapphire shield* protects the being it encloaks against all psionic attacks and psionically-caused effects, breaking existing psionic contacts and influences for the duration of its existence. It can't be made to protect more than one being (even if its protected target is in direct physical contact with other beings) and can be effectively cast on the same being only once in any three-day period. If it is cast more often on the same being, it automatically fails, producing only a momentary wash of green radiance around the target creature.

Malaeragoth's Fate

The Unseen Dragon is playing a dangerous game. His continued success depends on his existence remaining unsuspected, or at least his whereabouts and identity staying unknown. As Elminster observes, "No one—gods or mortals—can remain hidden forever."

The Old Mage suspects that Malaeragoth of the Realm of Stone and Shadow will come to a violent doom when his meddlings go too far, or when they touch the wrong being. Most of the Chosen know of his existence, and Elminster suspects at least one Red Wizard is watching over the Unseen Dragon in much the same way as Malaeragoth watches over the strivings and intrigues of Sembia and the Cult.

The massed Cult of the Dragon, should it bring all of its force to bear in concert—and manage to avoid most of the traps of the dragon's Realm—should alone be able to destroy Malaeragoth. On the other hand, Elminster observed in dry tones, it might well take the direct power and guidance of a god to make all of the Cult do anything together.



Ed Green wood has always wanted to live in a castle. At SCA feasts, he's always wanted to play the part of a high court lady staring out from the battlements, saying he rather fancies wearing some of those gowns. Those who've attended Halloween parties with him are universal in their advice to stick to his usual rusty armor; it flatters pot bellies and hairy arms rather better than do plunge-front gowns.

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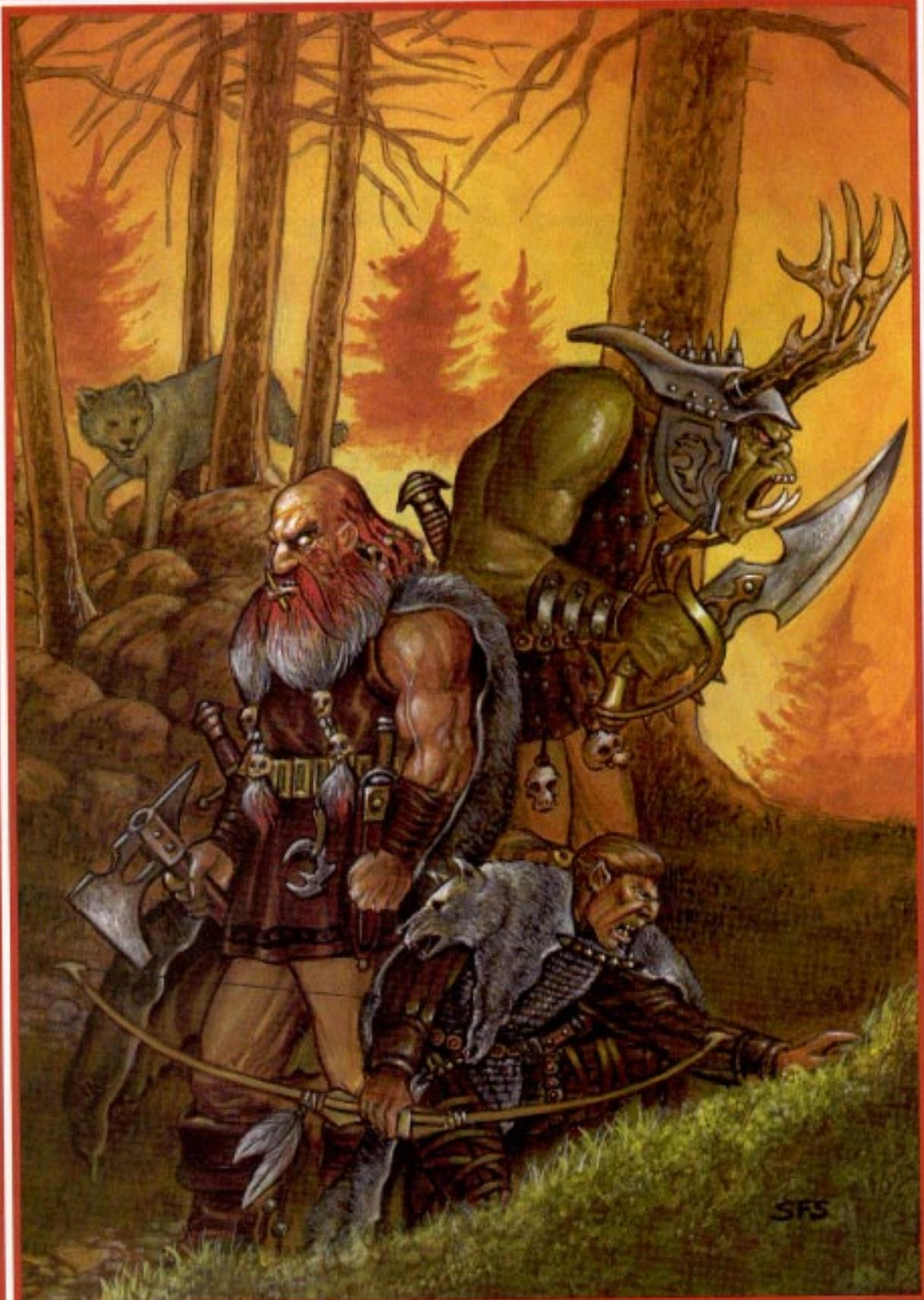
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SFS

TWILIGHT FADED. The forest shadows lengthened, deepened, moving through the northern woodlands as subtly as stalking wolves. To the small band of hunters, it seemed that night came with a swift, sudden rush, as if the shadows leaped out, converging like a pack to engulf and devour the day.

With the darkness came a temporary end to the hunt. The hunters cast a final, wistful glance toward a trail they could no longer see, and then settled down to make camp and await the moonrise. Their campfire kindled, and a questing wisp of smoke rose toward the forest canopy in a meandering path, as if it sought the company of other smoke from other fires. There would be many campfires in this forest this night, as the Talons of Malar sang their boastful songs and celebrated the first day of their sacred hunt.

The youngest of these Talons, these hunters, was a half-orc lad only this day blooded. His name was Drom, and he swallowed hard as he crouched by the fire to regard by its flickering lights his first trophies. For some reason, the three torn and bloody elven ears lying in his palm raised his gorge as the battle itself had not. Could not. After all, Drom was a follower of Malar the Beastlord, summoned by his god to the Great Hunt. The half-orc's blood still sang with the glory and frenzy of the slaughter.

Grimlish, an orc of immense size and hideous green visage, grunted in approval as he regarded the trophies. It was because of Grimlish that Drom had taken the ears. Grimlish was a strong hunter, and he held great honor in the tribe. What he was, Drom aspired to become. The orc wore around his neck a long leather thong, decorated with many grisly bits of tanned leather, dyed bright red but unmistakable in their origin. Drom wanted a necklace like that, and he was eager to earn it. From his belt he took a small wineskin filled not with wine but with a potent mixture of tanning acid and crushed berries. He slipped his three trophies into the skin. It was a good start.

The big orc sat down beside the fire and undid the chin strap of his helmet. That helmet was another thing that Drom envied, another thing he hoped one day to emulate. It was constructed of metal-banded leather and decorated by a rack of elk antlers, each point sharpened to a razor's edge and dipped daily in fresh blood. It was a marvelous helm, worn in homage to the avatar form the god Malar took upon himself when he wished to hunt these forests.

Yet even as the thought formed, Drom knew he could never wear such a helmet. Grimlish stood seven feet tall and was immensely strong. His shoulders were nearly as broad as the haft of a spear, and his neck massive enough to support the antlers, and even to wield them in battle. Drom was no weakling, and despite his youth he boasted great height and prodigious strength. But he was more human than orc. His light brown face was as beardless, but the virgin yellow down on his chin gave promise of a northman's beard. Only his size, and the enlarged canines that thrust upward from his lower lip, gave proof of his



Elaine Cunningham

Artwork by Stephen Schwartz

orcish heritage. That, and the joy with which he'd slain the elves whose ears he soon would wear.

Drom slid a glance over at the orc, who was busy with his own trophies. "A good hunt," he ventured.

"Five," the orc boasted, holding up the proof of his kill. "And two more tomorrow."

The half-orc nodded. Today the Talons of Malar had routed a community of elves, and the slaughter had been great. Tomorrow the hunting would be different. The hoard had broken up into small bands now, the better to run stragglers to ground.

There were three of them in this band, all of them from the renegade Snow Wolf tribe. Their third member, a human known only as Badger, was a man of middle years. His chest and arms were knotted with muscle and covered with tattoos, as was his clean-shaved head. Badger approached the business of killing with a glee and ferocity that awed and sometimes frightened the other members of the tribe. That, Drom allowed, was saying a great deal. After all, they were all followers of the Great Wolf, as fierce as any of their four-legged brothers.

Drom had been born into the Snow Wolf tribe, a small band of northmen fanatic in their worship of their totem animal. Over the years, they had mingled with like-minded orcs who hunted the same expanse of tundra, as well as the occasional renegade who slid into the pack. Badger was such a man—an outcast among his kind, surviving because he was cannier and more fierce than most. Despite the man's small stature and advancing years, he was a fearsome sight. One side of his lower lip had been pierced to accommodate a gold ornament shaped like an orc's tusk. On his opposite cheek was branded the symbol of Malar: a beasts paw, with talons dripping blood. Grim trophies hung about his waist from a well-laden weapons belt: small skulls, animal tails, and the teeth of great predators. In the place of honor hung a silver wolf's tail.

They all wore the wolf, in one form or another. Drom wore a skin about his neck like a cloak, and Grimlish had attached a tail to the back of his helm. These were not trophies, but tributes. They followed Malar now, for the Great Hunter had stalked and slain their totem spirit, the Snow Wolf. But they still revered the wolves and wore skins in honor of the canny hunters.

Drom, in particular, looked to the wolf for inspiration and guidance. From his earliest years, the wolf had haunted his dreams, filling his waking thoughts. The wolf pelt on his shoulder had the comforting warmth of a brother's hand. Indeed, the wolf who'd yielded the pelt was more of a brother than any two-legged male of Drom's village.

Drom had been a mere child when he first set eyes upon the silver-furred she-wolf, heavy with young. Following the wary female to her den had been no easy matter, but Drom had finally found it: a hollow under a small, rocky hillock. For weeks he stalked the female and her mate, watched the den until the pups—four of them, each as round and silver and

fluffy as a seed-ripe dandelion—ventured out into the wider world. Drom had watched, enthralled, as the pups played and tussled and explored. He had lifted his hand to his mouth to stifle delighted laughter at the sound of their first, infant howls. He had watched them grow into hunters, learned from them, picked the fiercest and most intrepid young wolf as his own. And when Drom had first heard the call of Malar, he had done what any male of his tribe must do: he had challenged and bested his brother wolf.

Drom lifted one hand to stroke the silvery fur that draped his shoulders. He was certain the wolf's spirit bore him no ill will. It was the way of the pack: the victory of the strongest and best was cause for celebration, and honor was also due to a worthy foe or well-earned prey. Did not the wolves sing after a battle or a difficult hunt, in praise of both hunter and hunted?

As if in echo of his thoughts, a long, eerie cry rose into the night, gathering power as it rose and fell.

The giant orc grunted in approval. "The Singing Death. It is a good omen. We will hunt well tomorrow."

"We will hunt women tomorrow," Badger said in disgust. But as he spoke, he drew a long knife from his belt and regarded the blood upon it with deep hunger.

Drom understood. One of the precepts of Malar was that a hunter should taste the blood of those he slew. The elven female was not yet dead, and it galled the old hunter to sit calmly at the fire while her blood dried on his blade. Though Badger spoke with derision, Drom had never seen a female fight so fiercely, or so well. In his mind, the fact that Badger had gotten close enough to the female to mark her as his prey was a shining testament to his skill.

"Many hunters sought that particular doe. The ravens feed on them tonight," Drom pointed out.

Badger scoffed, misunderstanding the intended compliment. "So? You would turn back? Perhaps you wish to die an old man."

This was the deepest insult one Talon of Malar could offer another. But though Drom was young, he was too wise to challenge the human. "If I can reach your years and equal your kills, I will consider myself a true hunter," he said calmly.

Badger looked surprised, then pleased. "Well enough. The moon is nearly full tonight. Soon it will be high and bright. Maybe the male will be yours to kill."

Coming from the human, this was an enormous concession. "I will hunt well," Drom promised.

The three of them settled down around the fire, to tell stories of past glories and to await the coming of the moon.



The attack on the elven village had been sudden, brutal. From all sides they came, closing in like a pack of wolves intent upon bringing down a lone stag. In a single moment, the time it might take an elf to pull on his boots or kiss his lady, the gaiety of a spring

market faire had been transmuted into a bloody, shrieking nightmare.

None of the elves doubted for an instant that they were fighting for their lives. This was no mere raid, no band of brigands meaning to despoil the village of elven treasure. The symbol of Malar, the beasts paw with bloody claws, was much in evidence, proclaiming the intent of the orcs and northmen who swarmed the village—and the fate that awaited the elves and the hapless merchant caravan that had wandered unwitting into the path of a Great Hunt.

But with the caravan were many well-seasoned warriors, their swords hired by the promise of gold and their loyalty ensured by the fearsome reputation of their employer. Elaith Cralnuber, a merchant lord of elven blood, had fought alongside his human mercenaries, and fought better than most of them.

More than a score of the orc dogs and human mongrels fell to his blades. Elaith killed them faster than he would have liked. He was a rogue elf, with no regard for any law but his own and a well-earned reputation for cruelty. He would have liked to unleash this cruelty upon the followers of Malar, leaving them to die slowly or to live, maimed past any hope of hunting and cursed with a long, inglorious life. But the elves were gravely outnumbered, and though they fought bravely, the slaughter was swift and terrible. In moments, Elaith knew that the battle was lost. He commanded the elves in the old tongue, demanding that they take to the trees, scatter and flee.

All had obeyed him, but one. A half-elven woman had hung back, standing back-to-back with one of the hired swords, a human woman of immense girth and fierce skill. Together they had guarded the base of a giant cedar, holding off a circle of Malar's hunters and buying time for several wounded elves to climb to safety.

In retrospect, Elaith realized that he should have expected nothing different. In matters of honor and courage, Arilyn had few peers. Not quite a friend, no longer a foe, the half-elf was one of the few warriors he knew whose skill exceeded his own. There was no one he'd rather have at his back, and no one to whom he owed a deeper loyalty.

And so he had come to her aid. He'd pulled a knife from his boot, and hurled it. The gleaming weapon spun end over end, destined to bury itself between the shoulder blades of a yellow-braided northman. Elaith had not waited to see the man fall.

He drew swords and charged the circle, climbing over the northman's back even as the man fell. As the elf ran, he swirled both swords downward, deftly cut the hamstrings of the men on either side, and then slammed his swords into their sheaths. Not slowing, he dodged an orc's battle axe, ducked under the half-elf's defensive swing. He came up still running, with Arilyn slung over his shoulder and the spell components for a Dust Cloud in his hand.

The last thing he'd seen upon abandoning his company was the spear that slipped under the breast-plate of the human warrior. She had grunted like a

slaughtered sow. The sound had disgusted fastidious Elaith, and angered Arilyn beyond all measure of reason. She had rewarded him for this rescue with a blistering diatribe delivered in old Elvish and leavened with dock-side profanity. But she had had the sense not to fight him, and so they had escaped with their lives.

But now, when the night was yet dark and the fleeing elf deemed the moment safe for a brief rest, Elaith saw the true reason for Arilyn's uncharacteristic docility. He had been a heartbeat too slow, a single pace too late. The half-elf had been wounded, and she was bleeding profusely from a gash that opened her arm from shoulder nearly to elbow. Elaith eased her down, cursing himself, the gods in general, and Malar in particular.

She put away her sword and then stood glaring at him, her eyes fierce in her too-pale face. "What of your hirelings? We can't leave them to die."

The elf lifted one shoulder in an impatient shrug. "They are human."

"I am half human," Arilyn retorted.

"You are also half dead," Elaith pointed out.

Though the remark was said in dark humor, there was more truth in it than he liked to speak. He pushed the stubborn warrior down onto a fallen log, then knelt to tend her. He took a knife from a wrist strap and carefully cut away the blood-soaked fabric of her shirt.

The elf's face was grim as he examined the wound. "It is not so bad as I thought. None of the main blood routes are severed, and it may be that there is no serious damage to the muscles. I will have to clean and stitch it, though."

Arllyn nodded, then impatiently waved away the bit of thick leather he handed her to bite upon. She set her jaw and looked away as he worked, her eyes scanning the forest.

"The stream there. We can follow it for a while, then walk, then take to the trees and double back to the stream. Do that repeatedly, and vary the pattern twice or thrice, and veer off to another stream when the flow converges, and even the Malarites will be hard pressed to follow our trail."

The plan was a good one, and under better circumstances it may well have worked. "But how long could you hold such a pace?"

Arllyn turned and met his eyes. "As long as I have to," she said firmly. "Days."

Elaith did not doubt that she would try. "And if we are overtaken, you would stand and fight?"

She shrugged, as if asking him to get to the point.

The elf sighed. Arilyn might be only half elven by blood, but she was as stubborn and heartstrong as the elven princess who had birthed her, and whom Elaith had loved. Because of her heritage, Elaith owed her an elfnoble's allegiance, as well as the loyalty of near kin. This was not the first time they had traveled together. Elaith had long ago come to admire and respect Arilyn for what she was, her human blood notwithstanding. But there were times, and this was

one of them, when he wanted nothing so much as to throttle her. Hers was the sort of traditionally elven thinking that, in Elaith's opinion, had led to the decline of the race and would undoubtedly lead to her death and his.

It was time for new tactics.

Elaith's sharp eyes scanned the forest. Downstream, a doe dipped her muzzle into the dark water.

A slow, cunning smile curved the elf's lips. "To the stream, then, and quickly," he agreed. "The hunt will begin in earnest with the coming of moonrise."



The howling intensified, filling the forest around them. Grimalish rose and gathered up his horned helm and his gear. The others followed suit. The moon would soon rise: the wolfsong heralded its coming as surely as a rooster's call foretold the dawn.

Suddenly Badger froze. He swore softly and with great delight as he reached for his longest knife. Drom followed the line of his gaze. There, in the shadows of a young pine, its silvery coat touched by the first slanting shafts of moonlight, was a large amber-eyed wolf.

Forgetting his order in this particular pack, Drom reached out and stayed the old hunter's hand. "It will not attack."

Even as he spoke, Drom's conviction wavered. Wolves were unpredictable, and their ways were too complex and mysterious for most people to fathom. To farmfolk, timid sheep that they were, the wolf was a ravening monster. Rangers, druids, and other like-minded fools took an extreme view: they romanticized the wolf as a noble soul, uncorrupted by such greed and whim that plagued humankind, unselfishly strengthening the bloodline of its prey by culling the weak, the old, the infirm. Drom scorned both of these views, not because they were false—there was some truth to both of them—but because neither captured the true spirit of the wolf, or of the Wolf People who took inspiration from the Singing Death.

In the year just four winters past, the caribou calves had simply disappeared, though the cows had been heavy in the spring and there was no late, killing snow. The spoor of the wolves told the tale: for weeks they ate caribou and little else. Yet even so, surely they had killed more calves than they could possibly eat. Though Drom and his village had suffered that following winter for lack of food, this event had confirmed the young half-orc in his faith. Even the grimly practical tundra wolves were not immune to the pure glory of the hunt, the joy of the kill. And this lone wolf—what mysterious purpose lurked behind those unfathomable eyes?

Badger threw off the half-orc's restraining hand. "Attack? Of course it won't attack. Wolves are too smart. It is one, and we are three. But it would be a fine kill."

"We hunt a more foolish prey," Grimalish pointed out. "Let us be off."

The two hunters fell into pace behind the big orc. The trail was almost ridiculously easy to follow, for the female left a trickle of blood. Drom envisioned the elf with a mixture of anticipation and awe. She was tall with a wild tangle of black hair and eyes that blazed blue fire. Many of the Talons of Malar had fallen to her sword. Even when it must have been clear that all was lost, that death was certain, she had stood her ground. She might be fighting still, had not a male elf with silver hair and a hawk's wild eyes intervened. The elf had cast a spell—a cloud of light and stinging dust that had sent the Talons reeling back. It had given the elves time to escape, but it had not obscured the trail.

The trickle of blood dwindled, but still the Talons followed the trail. A smear of blood on a newly-leafed branch, an occasional deep indentation in the moss when the male's boots had trod. Usually, elves left little sign of their passing, but the male was still carrying the wounded female.

As the hunters walked, the large wolf followed, its silver-tipped fur reflecting the moonlight. Badger grew increasingly restive, but Grimalish refused to allow the man to attack. "The wolf is an omen," he insisted. "Perhaps even a spirit guide."

Badger spat. "The wolf is a wolf. Who's to say it's not testing us?"

There was some wisdom in the human's words. Wolves often tested their prey, tracking them for long hours and making experimental forays, withdrawing if they deemed the task too dangerous. For a wolf, perhaps one of every fifty hunts begun actually ended in a kill.

"We are three. Perhaps it is you who wishes to die an old man," Grimalish said coldly. The look of disdain he sent the human settled the matter and reduced Badger to sullen silence.

They followed the trail deeper into the forest. It came to rest beside a fallen log. The elves had stopped here and attempted to staunch the tell-tale flow. There were no footprints leading away, which meant that the male was once again walking lightly. But the female was weakened now, and staggering. There were smears of blood on branches and vines, the marks a careless elf might leave if she allowed her sodden clothing to brush against the foliage.

She had not gone far. A hundred paces, no more, and she had fallen heavily into the underbrush—small, broken twigs shouted the story. There was more blood.

"Her wound opened," Drom murmured.

But Badger was not so sure. "Alone, the male might survive. To stay with the female means certain death. But is he cunning enough to know this, and strong enough to act?"

"It would seem not," Grimalish said. The orc knelt nearby, brushing away some of the half-decayed autumn leaves to get to the spring-soft mud beneath. There was the deep print of an elven boot. The male had shouldered his burden once again.

The trail led to a stream—a simple-minded ploy, one that had even inexperienced Drom snorting in derision. A few paces downstream, they found the trail's end.

Beside the stream bed stood an ancient oak, its roots partially exposed by the eroding flow. Some of the soil had been hastily dug, then pressed back in.

Badger spat. "An elf cairn. We lost the female."

Drom was not so sure. He circled around the stream in search of the trail. It was there, but faint—the still-damp outline of an elven boot on an otherwise dry rock. "The sign continues here. Only one elf. But it could be that the other took to the trees. They both fought well. Perhaps the cairn is a trick. Perhaps they both live, and they plan to flank us, one to draw us into battle and one to attack by surprise. It is not the usual way of elves, but it would be a worthy plan."

He was about to say more, but the approach of their silvery shadow stunned him into silence.

Cautiously, ears back and belly to the ground, the wolf crept closer—so close that any of the three Talons could reach it with a kick. Drom noted the creature's prominent ribs, its submissive position. The wolf was alone and hungry. Its posture was that of a supplicant, asking the more powerful members of the pack for permission to feed.

Drom backed away and gestured for the others to follow. The wolf began to dig at the roots.

"One elf," Grimalish concluded, turning away to follow the trail.

They tracked the male for hours. He was clever, moving from stream to land to tree and back, in a complex pattern that had the hunters circling about more than once. So they went through the night, until the moon set and the silvery light of dawn began to creep through the forest.

The wolf rejoined them with the coming of light, its silvery muzzle still stained with the blood of its meal. Sated and content, he padded along behind them, as if he were fully a member of their pack and eager to share in the next kill. This seemed to amuse Badger, who said no more about taking its pelt. Grimalish, who had been a shaman of the Snow Wolf before the triumph of Malar, regarded the animal with respect.

Only Drom was not so certain. All his life, he had admired the wolf, numbering foremost among its virtues the ability to adapt, to surprise. There were secrets in this particular wolf's amber eyes that Drom could not fathom.

But then the trail ended, and there was no more time for such thoughts. The three Talons stared in astonishment at their quarry.

One elf stood in a forest clearing, ready for battle. But it was not the silver-haired male, but the female. Her wounded arm had been tended and bound, the bandages dry and clean. She drew her sword and whistled it through the air, with a deft and dangerous skill that proclaimed louder than words that she was still able to fight.

Badger swore as he drew his blade—the same long knife that had marked her as his prey. Dropping into a crouch, the deadly hunter began to circle. Just beyond the reach of her sword, he stalked and tested, lunging in from time to time to measure her reach, observe the force and power of her swing. The other Talons

bided their time, letting the human tire the elfwoman. The wolf, also, stood watch, sitting on its haunches.

Before long Grimalish tired of this sport. The orc leveled his spear and came in for the kill. The elfwoman spun, bringing her sword down hard on the haft of the weapon. The force of her blow drove the spear's point downward, and deep into the forest floor. Grimalish could not halt his charge. The spear bent like a bow in his hands. He released it, an instant before it would have flung him up and over the elfwoman. The weapon sprang upright, quivering like a sapling in a gale. Grimalish fell back, but not before the female's sword scored a deep gash across his chest.

Badger darted in for the kill. With astonishing speed, the elf pivoted and kicked out. Her booted foot caught the man just below the ribs and bent him double. Before he could recover, she swept her sword up and around into a powerful upward slash. The bald, tattooed head went spinning off into the forest, and the man slumped to the sodden earth.

But in her triumph, the elfwoman ensured her defeat. The powerful blow opened her wound, and the bandage on her arm turned as deep a crimson as the tanned ears on Grimalish's trophy necklace. The wounded orc, scenting another victory, drew a pair of long knives and closed in, hissing at Drom to stand back and leave this kill to him.

Suddenly the orc jerked, his massive back arching and his arms thrown out wide. The morning light glinted from the jeweled hilt of the knife buried deep between his shoulder blades. The female stepped forward and drew her sword cleanly across Grimalish's throat.

Suddenly Drom understood the reason for his nagging uncertainty. He and his fellow hunters had been tricked. The trail of blood to the cairn was false, an illusion they might have seen through but for the actions of the wolf. Something had weighted down the male's step, something had been buried beneath that tree, but it was no elf.

"A doe," said a voice behind him, an elven voice musical in tone and rich with dark humor. Before the half-orc could move, a strong hand seized his yellow braid, and the keen edge of a knife pressed hard against his throat.

Drom knew that his death would be swift and well deserved. He, more than most, knew that wolves were canny and unpredictable. He cloaked himself with the pelt of a wolf to signal his respect for the animal and his desire to emulate him. Yet the elf had done him one better. In cloaking himself with the illusion of the wolf, the magic-wielding elf had proven himself the better hunter.

"Elaith, wait," the female protested, clutching her wounded arm and eyeing the clever ambush with disapproval. "He is just a boy."

"A boy? He cut down the village elder and sliced off his left ear. If this half-breed orc is old enough to kill, he is old enough to be killed," the male said coldly.

Still she hesitated. "But from behind? It is not the way of an elf."

"It is the way of a wolf," Drom countered. "The greatest hunters find new ways. I am bested, and I am content to die."

The female's eyes flicked to Drom's face, then over his shoulder to the elf who held him captive. A knowing look glinted in her blue eyes. "He wants to die," she said softly.

There was a long pause. The male did not loosen his hold on Drom's hair or move the knife from his throat. The half-orc could almost feel his captor's frustration and indecision.

Then the knife lifted, moved to the side. With a quick slash, the elf traced a wound in Drom's weapon arm that matched the one Badger had dealt the female—but deeper, rifling the muscle in a way that would never truly mend. Drom did not cry out, not then, and not even when the male's blade bit through his left boot, just above his ankle. Unable to stand, never again able to hunt, Drom slumped to the ground.

The female's eyes filled with fury. "That was not needed! Do you know what you've done to him?"

The elf called Elaith circled around, his wolf-gold eyes bright as he surveyed the ruined hunter. "Of course." With that, he turned and disappeared into the forest.

The female hesitated, then she reached into a bag at her belt and stooped beside Drom. She placed on the ground a small roll of cloth—a bandage, with a

small bone needle thrust into it. With this, he would mend himself, perhaps survive.

But why would he want to?

"The wisest wolves, the greatest hunters, find new ways," she said. Her voice was low and intense, and something in it drew Drom's gaze to hers. For a long moment, half-orc and half-elf, hunter and hunted, regarded each other with understanding and honor.

Then she was gone, moving lightly after the wolf-clever male.

For a long moment, Drom weighed his decision. Then he reached for the needle and the bandage. He would live. He would find new ways.

The young hunter lifted his voice in a howl to the Snow Wolf, a eerie cry that wavered through the forest, echoing through the trees and hanging in the morning mist and silvery light. Drom's wolfsong lingered long, in tribute to the wolf-clever elf who had proven himself the better hunter, and to his own determination to emulate the wolf, in a manner far different from any he had imagined.



Like the characters in this story, Elaine Cunningham has felt an affinity for wolves for as long as she can remember. She's still in the process of figuring out just why this is. In the mean while, she remains very much a cat person.

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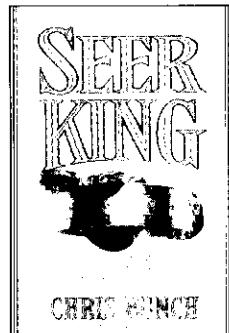
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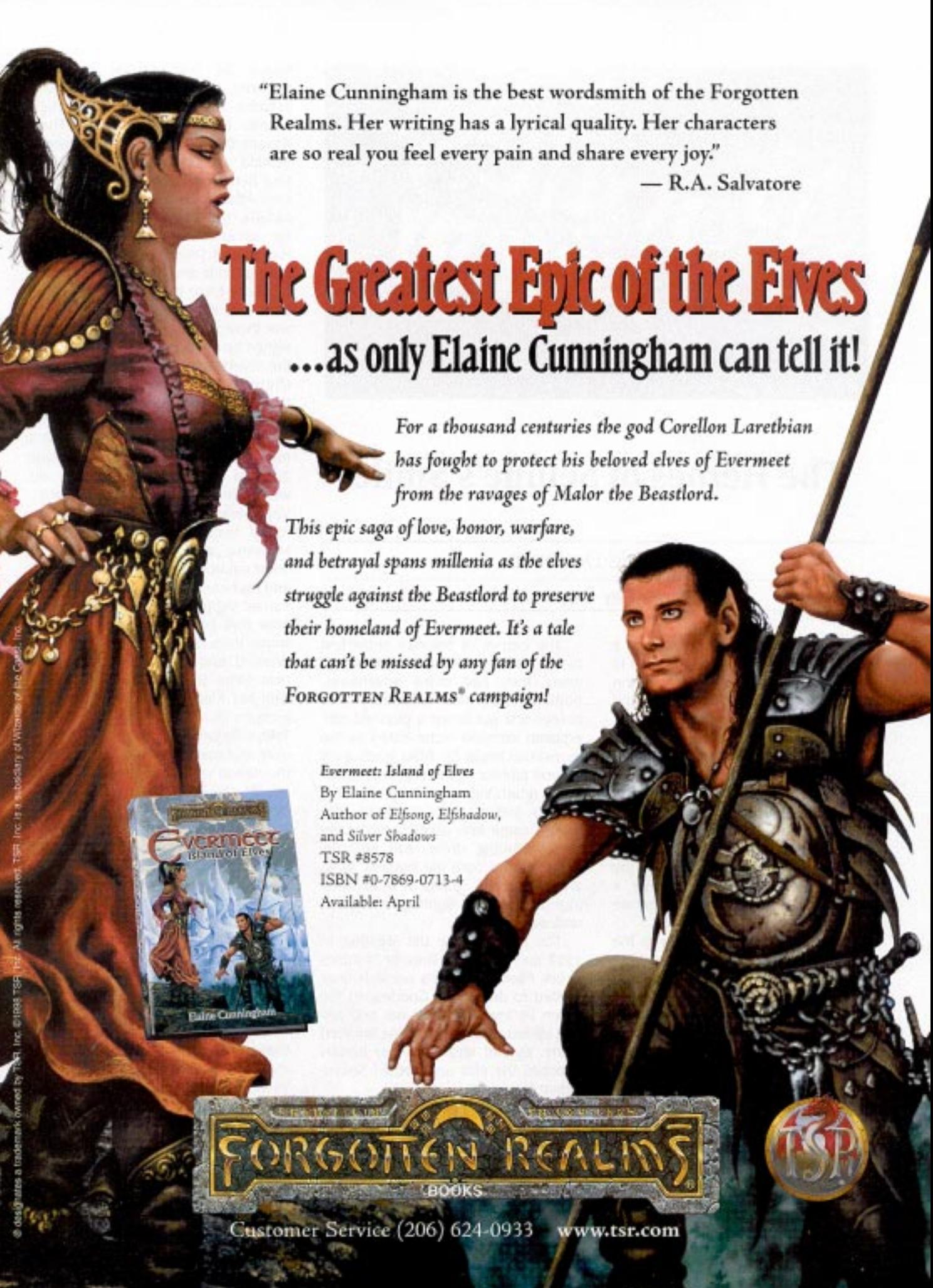


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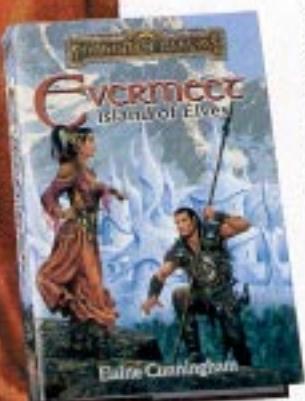
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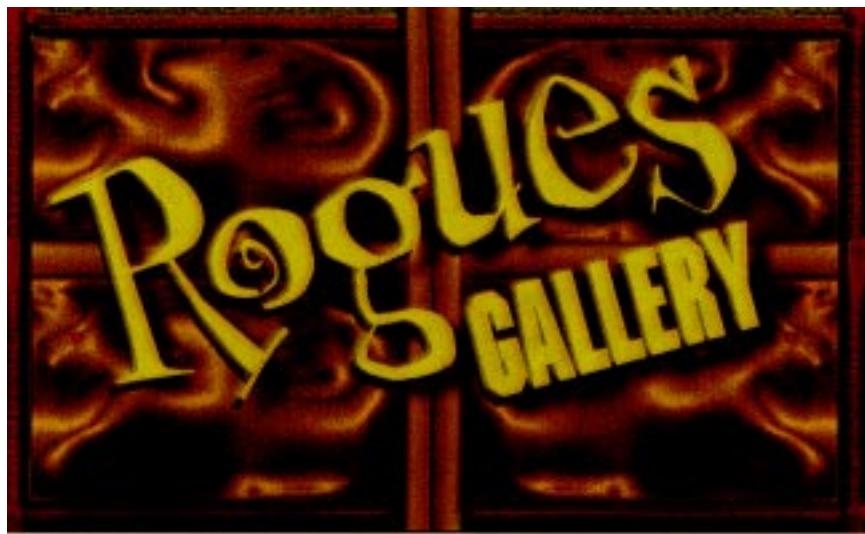
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The Heroes of Selûne's Smile

by Dale Donovan

illustrated by Rags Morales

ONCE THERE WERE TOLD TALES of a band of heroes who came together in the grand city of Waterdeep, at an inn known as Selûne's Smile. Vajra the warrior, Onyx the Invincible, Timoth the centaur, and Kyriani the half-elf sorceress fought dragons and vanquished fiends. They even helped Selûne, goddess of the moon, defeat Shar, the goddess of darkness, during the Time of Troubles. They also survived being drawn into the plots of Khelben "Blackstaff" Arunsun and the other Lords of Waterdeep. After a time, the heroes went their separate ways.

The stories of these heroes of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting were told in the *ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS®* comic book published by DC Comics from 1989 to 1991. After the comic ceased publication, the continuing tales of these heroes of Selûne's Smile went untold. Recently however, we've seen these heroes return in the pages of FORGOTTEN REALMS products. Vajra, Timoth, and Onyx appear in the *Lands of Intrigue* boxed set, and Kyriani makes a cameo appearance in the *Powers & Pantheons* accessory and in the forthcoming *For Duty & Deity* adventure.

The heroes of Selûne's Smile first met in 1352 D.R. For the next several years, they had many adventures, both together and individually. The heroes first put down a planned otherplanar invasion orchestrated by the monstrous Imgig Zu. After fending off several attacks by bounty hunters trying to return Vajra, an escaped gladiator, to slavery in Calimshan, the heroes came into conflict with many foes including drow, evil wizards, dragons, and both the lawyers' guild and the jesters' guilds of Waterdeep (not to mention fighting one giant undead jester).

The heroes were still together in 1357 D.R. when the Time of Troubles struck Faerûn. Selûne's nemesis Shar plotted to defeat the Goddess of the Moon by impersonating her and setting up her rule on the Prime Material Plane. Kyriani and the other heroes exposed the plot and helped Selûne defeat her enemy.

Sometime thereafter, the heroes went their own ways when Selûne returned to the Outer Planes. Vajra struck out on her own, hiring herself out as a mercenary in the North and beyond. Onyx and Timoth—the best of

friends for years—sought adventure together, traveling the length and breadth of Faerûn from the High Forest, across Anauroch to Thar, Ravens Bluff, the Sea of Fallen Stars, Sembia, and Cormyr. In 1368 D.R., the four heroes were reunited at the tavern. After a time of relaxed camaraderie, they sought an opportunity for adventure. At the time, Prince Haedrak of Tethyr was in Waterdeep, raising funds and organizing an expeditionary force to travel to his homeland and end the decades-long civil war there. Vajra, Onyx, and Timoth all signed on as mercenaries. Kyriani had the tavern and her strong ties to the church of Selûne to keep her in Waterdeep, so she wished her friends luck and sent them on their way.

Once in Tethyr, Prince Haedrak's forces allied with those of the heroic Zaranda Star. The three heroes did well in the campaigns that followed. Vajra was instrumental in saving many lives at the final siege of Myratma, and for that (among her other valorous deeds), Prince Haedrak and his new wife, Queen Zaranda Star named Vajra Duchess of Ankaram, an area that borders Calimshan to the south. Vajra also was appointed Royal Warlord and Protector of the royal heir. Vajra then used her influence with her friends to convince them to accept commissions in the army of Tethyr. Today, the Reclamation War is over, but many troubles still threaten the nation of Tethyr. Details of these events can be found in the *Lands of Intrigue* set by Steven E. Schend.

With the conflict in Tethyr relatively calm for the time being the three heroes there could invite Kyriani to visit. Once they were reunited, it's almost certain that adventure of some sort (as well as the PCs from your own campaign) would find them yet again.



Dale Donovan is the author (with Paul Culota) of the *Heroes' Lorebook* and that book's companion volume, the *Villains' Lorebook*, to be published in July, 1998. Dale wishes to thank Steven Schend for the loan of his *AD&D®* comics.

Vajra Valmeyjar

Duchess of Ankaram, Royal Warlord,
Regent Royal for Princess Cyriana

12TH-LEVEL HUMAN FIGHTER

STRENGTH:	18/23
DEXTERITY:	17
CONSTITUTION:	16
INTELLIGENCE:	13
WISDOM:	13
CHARISMA:	14
AC:	2
THAC0:	9
HIT POINTS:	96
ALIGNMENT:	NG
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	None
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6'1")

Weapon Proficiencies: Long sword (specialized), spear, sling, net, dagger, short sword, bastard sword, pummeling.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Blind-fighting (n/a), endurance (16), riding—land-based (16), rope use (17), fire-building (12).

Appearance: Tall, brown-skinned, and well muscled, Vajra wears her black hair short except for a long ponytail. A veteran of Manshaka's Arena of Blood, Vajra still wears the skull-headed manacle of a Warrior of Blood.

Despite her new status as a member of Tethyr's royalty, Vajra's taste in clothes still prefers leathers and chain mail to gowns more "appropriate" to a lady of her station. Even on those rare occasions when she can be convinced to don such apparel, she shocks many of the more conservative nobles with the thigh-high slits that allow her to reach the blades she straps to her thighs and calves.

Background: Vajra is a native of Tethyr but was separated from her parents and likely orphaned while Tethyr was still in the midst of a long, brutal civil war. "Vaji" fled south and found her way to the streets of Calimshan, where Conner, a human thief and conman, eventually befriended her.

When Vaji was 12, one of Conner's schemes went wrong, and he was forced to sell Vajra into slavery to Abon Duum, a Calishite pasha. As she grew, Vajra learned how to fight and was sent to the city of Manshaka and its Arena of Blood. There she fought gladiatorial combats against other slaves and free warriors. For ten years, she killed her opponents and earned her owner fortunes in wagers.

Finally, Vajra escaped and fled north, eventually coming to Waterdeep, where slavery is illegal. Several bounty hunters hired by Duum tried to recapture her, but Vajra, with her friends' help, kept her freedom.

When the heroes of Selûne's Smile parted ways, Vajra returned to the City of Splendors as a mercenary. There she joined Prince Haedrak's expedition to end the destructive civil war of Tethyr. Vajra was instrumental in the final siege of Myratma. In return, Queen Zaranda and Haedrak named her Duchess of the sparsely settled, southern plains of Ankaram.



Equipment: Vajra has access to almost any form of mundane equipment she might need. She is never without her gold, skull-faced slave manacle (the teeth bear a sharp edge for cutting bonds) worn on her right wrist, and a gold manacle on her left wrist that conceals a dagger blade.

Magical Items: Vajra's primary magical item is her long sword, *Moonblaze*. This blade was enchanted by Selûne herself and generates a magical cold flame (affecting even those immune to cold or fire) that deals double damage to worshipers of Shar and triple damage to extraplanar beings. The flames and the blade's other powers wax and wane with the phases of the moon as noted below:

Moon phase	Hits as	Init. Bonus
New	Silver weapon	+1
Quarter	+1 silver	+2
Half	+2 silver	+3
Three-quarters	+3 silver	+4
Full	+4 silver	+5

Roleplaying Notes: Vajra is decidedly uncomfortable with her new role in the nobility, preferring carousing to formal dinners, but she is well aware that she now holds the well-being of many people in her hands. She often becomes fed up with the life of a royal courtier and noble, and escapes these pressures (and the whispers of other nobles that she should find a man, settle down, and start having little dukes and duchesses), by donning her armor, saddling her horse, and riding off across Ankaram.

Timoth Eyesbright

10TH-LEVEL CENTAUR FIGHTER

STRENGTH:	16
DEXTERITY:	15
CONSTITUTION:	15
INTELLIGENCE:	12
WISDOM:	10
CHARISMA:	16
AC:	4 or 1 (in barding)
THAC0:	11
HIT POINTS:	82
ALIGNMENT:	CG
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Hooves: 1d6 (x2)
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	None
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	L (8' tall)

Weapon Proficiencies: Double-sword (specialized), long bow, long sword, pummeling, staff (he often uses his heavy bow in this way).

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Animal lore (12), running (9), survival—temperate forests and plains (12), direction sense (11), rope use (15), fire-building (9), hunting (9).

Appearance: A muscular, white-maned centaur with tan skin and gray-brown horsehair, Timoth looks quite the brute with his traditional garb of skins, furs, and face-paints. Timoth is even more impressive when he dons his armor and barding for battle.

Background: Timoth's tribe is located in Chondath, near the Chondalwood. Unlike the rest of his people, however, Timoth did not hesitate to mingle with other races, eventually leaving his home to wander the Realms seeking adventure.

His first recorded exploit was when he was hired to recover the Yalsur Jewel, a supposedly magical gem of great value. The dwarf Onyx was also on the trail of the stone, and the pair's first meeting led to a battle between them.

The centaur and the dwarf fought until the parties that had hired them broke in to take the gem for themselves. Realizing that they had been played for fools, Timoth and Onyx joined forces. The gem turned out to be cursed and almost worthless, but the friendship the two struck continues stronger than ever.

The pair traveled together, visiting such diverse places as several of the cities on the north coast of the Lake of Steam, the Land of the Lions north of the Lake (where Timoth made quite an impression on the nomadic horsemen who make their homes there), the Vilhon Reach, and southern Inner Sea-coast nations including Sespech and Chondath.

The two were headed to parts unknown when they encountered a female half-elf named Cybriani (see Kyriani below). In helping her reach Waterdeep, Timoth and the



others met Vajra and embarked on many adventures. Timoth's devotion to his friends, his strength, and his skill with his unique "double-sword" (see **Equipment** below) saved the day and his friends many times.

Timoth and Onyx have answered Vajra's call to arms, and the centaur is now a major in the Tethyrian army commanding a contingent of troops and cavalry in Trailstone, one of the Amnian towns that defected and joined the reunified Tethyr.

Equipment: Timoth's most unusual piece of equipment is his "double-sword." From both ends of the central hilt, two long sword blades spring forth at the touch of a button. Each blade inflicts damage as a normal long sword, plus the bonuses for Timoth's Strength and specialization.

Magical Items: Horseshoes of speed, longbow +3, and a ring of warmth.

Roleplaying Notes: Timoth is an open, trusting, kind-hearted soul. His naivete has landed him in trouble in the past, but his experiences with the other heroes and those in Tethyr's Reclamation War have given him a wisdom that has yet to dampen his cheerful spirit.

Unlike many centaurs, Timoth bears no racist or isolationist attitudes. Indeed, it was Timoth's kindness toward the distressed Cybriani that brought all the heroes together for the first time.

Onyx the Invincible

8TH-LEVEL DWARVEN FIGHTER/ 8TH-LEVEL THIEF

STRENGTH:	16
DEXTERITY:	17
CONSTITUTION:	18
INTELLIGENCE:	14
WISDOM:	12
CHARISMA:	10
AC:	-3
THAC0:	13
HIT POINTS:	60
ALIGNMENT:	NC
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Backstab
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	S (4'6" tall)

Weapon Proficiencies: Battle axe, blowgun, darts, club, dagger, hand axe.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Appraising (14) gaming (10), rope use (17), riding-land based (15), stonemasonry (14).

Thieving Skills: PP 50%; OL 97%; F/RT 90%; MS 87%; HS 54%; HN 25%; CW 66%; RL 0%.

Appearance: Still young for a dwarf, Onyx is only in his mid-fifties, and his flame-red hair and beard show no trace of gray. He tends to dress in brightly colored, billowing shirts and leggings, a vest, and a tufted helmet, with a bandolier of darts across his chest. When in battle he dons his plate mail. Though his thief skills are unlikely to aid him much in pitched battles, the stubborn dwarf strongly prefers not to wear armor, though he owns fine magical plate mail.

Background: Onyx's full name is Onyx, Blood of Placidor, which tells other dwarves that Onyx is the direct descendant of the dwarven hero of the battle of Twelvesuns. The rebellious soul that he is, Onyx does not use his full name, instead preferring a name he chose for himself, Onyx the Invincible.

Onyx is from Eartheart at the edge of the great Rift, one of the last great dwarven nations left on Faerûn. He met Timoth the centaur early in his career, and the two remain best friends. He and Timoth make an odd pair in combat, with Onyx sometimes riding Timoth's back. Onyx gains speed and height from this position, and Timoth gains a constant guard on his vulnerable flanks. With Timoth and the other heroes, Onyx defeated many great evils (all of which were taller than he, Onyx might add). He even met the dwarven god Dumathoin at one point.

After the heroes temporarily parted ways, Onyx and Timoth adventured together for a time, eventually returning to Waterdeep in time to join Vajra in Prince Haedrak's expeditionary force to Tethyr. Onyx acquitted himself well in the Reclamation War and is now a major commanding the fortification of Riatavin against possible attack. Onyx has



thrown himself into his work of late, as he recently met and fell in love with Kiira Ghalmrin, daughter of Arduke Obar Ghalmrin of Morndivver. Kiira loves Onyx as well, but she is betrothed to another, and her father has forbidden her to see Onyx in any case.

Equipment: As an officer in the Tethyrian military, Onyx has access to most types of conventional equipment, armor, and weapons, though he has run out of his darts and blowgun ammunition on several occasions during the fighting in Tethyr. He also has a full set of thieving tools.

Magical Items: Plate mail +2, a ring of the ram, six darts +1, and a dagger +2, longtooth.

Roleplaying Notes: Onyx is not a member of the "dour, taciturn" dwarven stereotype. Instead, he's hot-headed, temperamental, and filled with energy to get things done.

Onyx has matured somewhat as an officer in Tethyr's military, but he remains the most consciously impulsive hero of the group.

Onyx has no immediate plans to alter the situation regarding Kiira and him, but it remains only a matter of time before his lovelorn heart and his impulsive nature combine to move him into action to win her hand. Possibilities include trying to find any legitimate reason to cause the families to cancel the arranged marriage between Kiira and Obar, to accepting some task on behalf of Kiira's father to prove his worth.

Kyriani of Waterdeep

11TH-LEVEL HALF-ELF MAGE

STRENGTH:	9
DEXTERITY:	15
CONSTITUTION:	16
INTELLIGENCE:	17
WISDOM:	12
CHARISMA:	18
AC:	9
THAC0:	18
HIT POINTS:	49
ALIGNMENT:	N
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	30% resistance to sleep and charm spells M (5'3" tall)

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, staff, dart.

Nonweapon Proficiencies: Spellcraft (15), herbalism (15), reading/writing (18), riding—land based (15), rope use (15).

Commonly Memorized Spells: (4/4/4/3/3): *Armor, shield, magic missile, grease; continual light, glitterdust, invisibility shatter, fireball, lightning bolt fly, dispel magic; stoneskin, dimension door, Otiluke's resilient sphere; telekinesis, feebledmind, cone of cold.*

Appearance: Stunningly attractive, this gray-eyed, half-elf beauty has silver-white hair that seems to shimmer in the light. Starlike twinkling appears in her hair, especially under moonlight. Kyriani most often wears her hair tucked up, away from her face, and she typically wears high boots, form-fitting leathers, and a cape while adventuring, an expensive off-the-shoulder floor-length gown when attending services at the House of the Moon, or some compromise between these extremes while she's tending bar at Selûne's Smile, a tavern in Waterdeep.

Background: The daughter of a human mage (who was also the father of Priam Agrivar, a paladin who briefly traveled with these heroes before finding fame with Captain Omen and the crew of the Realmsmaster) and an evil drow sorceress, Kyriani must often battle to keep her mother's legacy of evil under control. Indeed, she originally called herself Cybriani, the "good" half of Kyri's soul. The "evil" half had broken free and appeared as the drow mage, Kilili. With help from her new friends, Timoth, Onyx, and Vajra, Cybriani and Kilili were reunited, and the combined being is Kyriani.

During the heroes' time in Waterdeep, Kyri grew quite close with Luna, owner of Selûne's Smile tavern. In fact, the bar became the group's de facto headquarters. As the heroes learned, Luna was actually an avatar of the goddess of the moon, Selûne, and Kyri was instrumental in helping



Selûne defeat an avatar of the moon goddess' arch-enemy, the goddess of night, Shar.

When "Luna's" time on the Prime plane ended, she willed ownership of the tavern to Kyri.

As running the tavern kept her in Waterdeep, Kyri did not join her friends in their journey to Tethyr. Instead, Kyri rose in the ranks of Selûne's church in Waterdeep, becoming the most influential layperson in the church today.

Equipment: Standard and traveling spell books, a full complement of spell components, and ready access to those items the owner of a tavern would have or need. It's also likely that, after years of running the tavern, Kyri is quite wealthy, though she donates much of the bar's profits to the House of the Moon.

Magical Items: *Ring of telekinesis, ring of shooting stars, dagger +1, and a wand of frost.*

Roleplaying Notes: Lascivious and mischievous, Kyri has a virtual army of lovers in and around Waterdeep and, despite her power and status, intends to enjoy each and every day of her life to the fullest.

Despite her mischievous behavior, Kyri is not a woman to be taken for granted or patronized. Her heritage gives her a fiery temper when she feels slighted, and she has progressed far as a mage in the last few years, studying seriously under the tutelage of several potent mages around the City of Splendors.

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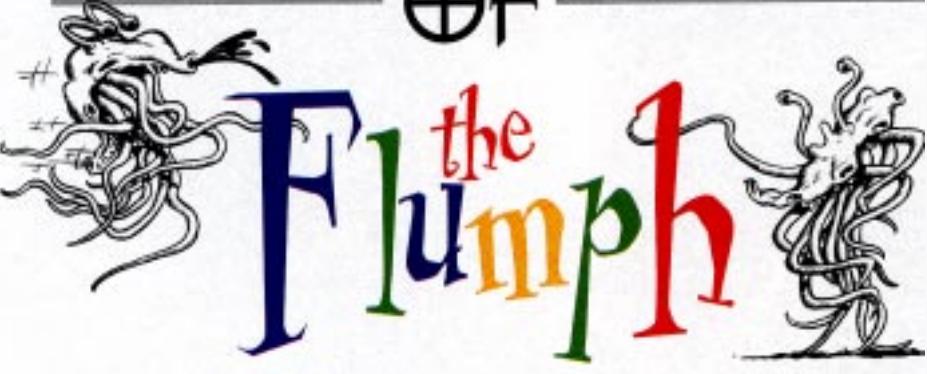
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THE ECOLOGY OF Flumph



by Johnathan M. Richards

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"WELL THEN, if there is no further business," said Dreelix, his gavel raised in the air to strike the table, "I hereby declare this meeting of the Monster Hunters Associa—"

He was cut off in mid-sentence by a commotion in the doorway. Buntleby hustled into the meeting hall, out of breath and with a large, squirming sack tucked under one arm. Ozzie, his osquip familiar, trotted obediently at his feet. "I'm sorry I'm late," he said, "but I was unavoidably detained."

"Late?" squeaked Dreelix. "I was just about to adjourn! You must learn to be a bit more punctual if you wish to continue in this prestigious . . . guh! By the gods! What is that smell?"

Dreelix wasn't the only one to notice. All around the room, the collected wizards and sages that made up the Monster Hunters Association were getting a good whiff of the stench that Buntleby seemed to have brought into the meeting hall with him. Throughout the room, nostrils flared and noses wrinkled in disgust. Lady Ablasta raised a perfumed hand-kerchief to her nose and pretended not to notice as others administered

table napkins or bits of their own cloaks or robes in an attempt to ward off the vile odor.

"Oh, that. Sorry. I sort of had a little encounter on the way here..." Buntleby reached into his bag and pulled out its contents—a whitish, disk-shaped creature with writhing tentacles on top.

"I don't want to hear about it! Get out of here with that thing!"

"Wait!" said Spontayne, a taciturn scholar who seldom spoke up. "Is that what I think it is?"

"Beats me," said Buntleby. "I haven't the foggiest idea what the thing is. I was hoping maybe Willowquisp could tell us."

Willowquisp the Zoophile, an elderly sage with a fondness for all of nature's creatures—even the silly ones—squinted over at his friend. "Why, bless my soul!" he said. "That looks like a flumph!" Spontayne nodded his head in agreement.

"It attacked one of my osquips," Buntleby said. "I managed to capture it, but not before it squirted some foul-smelling gunk all over me. It seems harmless enough now, but it has some unusual properties, and I thought maybe the Association might want to study it."

"Fine, fine," agreed Dreelix, barely understandable as he spoke with his left hand over his nose and mouth. "I hereby appoint Willowquisp, Spontayne, and Buntleby as a sub-committee to study the creature. Zantoullios, maybe you'd better join them. Any questions? Good. Meeting adjourned!" And without another word, he jumped up from the head table and rushed out the door into the fresh night air.

Zantoullios wasn't the most powerful wizard among the Monster Hunters, but he did have the best-equipped lab, filled with the most modern equipment. He prided himself on being on the cutting edge of magical experimentation technology. Perhaps more truthfully, the reason his paraphernalia was so new was it was constantly being replaced after Zantoullios' experiments blew up in his face. He still hadn't lived down his recent attempt to use a summoned fire elemental to test the flame-resisting properties of a new magical oil. The battered sword he had coated in the oil survived just fine; the lab, converted from an old wooden barn, didn't fare quite as well.

Buntleby arrived at Zantoullios' recently-restored laboratory to find the other three members of the newly-created subcommittee already there. Willowquisp was seated at a table, poring over a large book he had brought with him, with Spontayne the Studious looking over his shoulder and nodding occasionally to himself. Zantoullios was pouring brandy into four beakers.

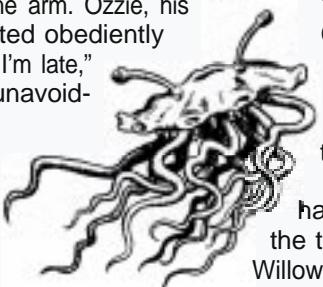
"Hope you don't mind the glassware, Buntleby; I brought the bottle but left the glasses back at the house."

"That's fine. Why'd you build the lab so far away from the house, though? Seems a bit inconvenient."

"It's, uh, safer that way," Zantoullios admitted. "I've had to rebuild the lab three times now after things . . . kind of got out of hand, but the house has managed to avoid any damage so far. Willowquisp? Spontayne? Some brandy? No? Suit yourselves. So, is that the beast?"

Buntleby took the beaker and placed his sack on the worktable. It shifted and wiggled around as the flumph inside it tried vainly to escape. "Thanks," he said to his host. "So, where should we start?"

Willowquisp cleared his throat. "Spontayne and I have been reading

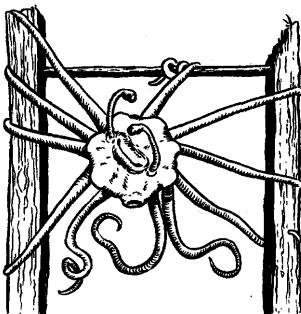




up on it, and you're right: there are some rather interesting features about the creature. Why don't you start by telling us how you came across it?"

Buntleby sipped his brandy and began his tale. "Well, I had just walked out the door and was on my way to the meeting hall when I heard a squeal from the direction of the osquip pen around back. I dashed to the back and found the flumph perched atop one of my osquips—Squinty—with its tentacles wrapped around his body to hold it in place. I ran forward to pull the thing off, when it spotted me with its eyestalks.¹ It immediately let go of Squinty and rose up into the air. I saw its base swivel slightly,² and before I knew it, I was being sprayed with this liquid that—well, you all got a whiff of it, and that was after it had worn off a bit.³"

"It stunk even worse than Grindle's patented garlic and onion stew!" suggested Zantoullios.



1. A flumph's eyestalks can move independently of one another, giving it a wide field of vision. As the creatures are nocturnal, flumphs have infravision to a range of 60 feet. They have no eyelids and so cannot close their eyes, even during sleep. For this reason, they are seldom surprised in visually-oriented situations. (For example, it would be difficult to walk up to one without it being aware of the approach.) On the other hand, they tend to take more damage from light-based assaults (for example, they save at -2 against *light* spells cast on them to temporarily blind them).

If an eyestalk or tentacle is severed, it takes about a week to grow back. One-eyed flumphs strike at -2 to hit due to a lack of depth perception; those missing a tentacle or two are not impeded and cause full damage with their acid attacks.

2. The flumph hovers by an innate form of anti-gravity, but it maneuvers by means of several small holes along the rim of its disk-shaped body. A mouth-like organ on its top takes in air, which can be expelled by any of the holes along the rim. Air being jetted out the back of the flumph's body propels it forward; air jetted from the creature's left sends it to the right, and so on.

The air jets propel the creature horizontally, while it moves vertically at will by means of its anti-gravity ability. Its tentacles are used like rudders, enabling the creature to spin clockwise or counter-clockwise, depending on the placement of the tentacles as it forces air out one of its rim holes. This is important in lining up its defensive spray, as the liquid can be expelled from only one of the eight rim holes. This one rim hole is usually referred to as the creature's "front" (a somewhat arbitrary position on a radially-symmetrical creature).

"Anyway," continued Buntleby, "there was a butterfly net at the side of the house, so I grabbed it up thinking to capture the creature for study. Meanwhile, Squinty was running around in a panic at my feet, and in all of the confusion, I sort of..." He winced in memory of the event, and stopped talking.

"Tripped over him?" guessed Willowquisp.

"Stepped on him, actually," admitted Buntleby. "On his head."

"Oof!" said Willowquisp. "Is he okay?"

Buntleby grimaced. "He bit his tongue."

"That's not so bad," pointed out Spontayne.

"Off," added Buntleby. "You know what their teeth are like?"

"Poor thing."

"Getting back to the flumph..." suggested Willowquisp.

"Oh, right. Well, stepping on Squinty put my swing a little off. I twisted my ankle and went plummeting to the ground, but on the way down I gave the net a wild swing at the flumph. I hit him on one side, but as it turned out this was a lucky break, because instead of catching him in the net I flipped the creature over in mid-air, and it crashed to the ground on its back. It seems to be helpless when its upside-down."⁴

"Yes, that's mentioned in my book," noted Willowquisp. "So then what?"

"Well, I fixed Squinty up as best as I could—poured a *potion of healing* down his throat, you know, the cherry-flavored kind he likes. His back was scarred from the flumph's attack,⁵ but the potion healed him up okay. So I threw the flumph into an old potato sack and raced to make it to the meeting in time. I guess that's about it."

"So what prompted you to bring the creature to the Association for study?" asked Willowquisp.

"Well, I figured there's got to be something we can make out of it. Zantoullios?"

"Well, you've got our procedures backward: usually, we come across a formula for a new spell or a magical item, find out what strange body parts we need, and then plan a Hunt accordingly.

But still, we'll see what we can come up with. Hmm, hovering: *potions of levitation*, perhaps, or spell components for *levitate*, or possibly reverse gravity spells... he muttered to himself, his mind already examining the possibilities. "Acid secretions: tentacles might be useful in *oil of acid resistance*, possibly tie it in somehow with a *Melf's acid arrow* spell? Maybe. Smelly squirting liquid: *stinking cloud* spell components, perhaps . . . I'll have to check my formulae."⁶ He

3. A flumph's defensive spray squirts out in a 60° arc from its "front," with a range of 20 feet. The liquid is extremely foul-smelling, something of an unappealing mélange of skunk musk, rotting cabbages, and the unwashed armpits of a sweaty, overweight orc. The stench causes those struck to save vs. poison or be unable to attack for 2-5 rounds due to extreme nausea and dizziness. The odor from this attack lasts for up to 4 hours and is detectable from 100 feet away. (This scent could easily attract wandering monsters.) The flumph's spray attack also propels it in the opposite direction, since the attack emanates from one of its rim holes. A flumph can use its spray only once every ten rounds.

4. A flumph is virtually helpless when placed on its back, even more so than a turtle. The creature's innate anti-gravity is aimed downward from the creature's lower side, making it useless if the flumph is flipped over. Its many tentacles are capable of delicate maneuvering but do not possess much strength, so the flumph is unable to flip itself over by grasping at nearby handholds. Furthermore, its "maneuvering jets" cannot be employed unless it is levitating, and this includes the one responsible for its defensive spray. To add insult to injury, its long eyestalks are pinned by its body when overturned, so the creature cannot even get a good look at what is going on around it.

5. Although the flumph's "mouth" is on its upper surface, it is used for air intake only. The creature actually feeds by means of several small spikes located centrally on its underside, surrounded by its tentacles. The flumph drops down on its prey (mostly frogs, lizards, and small rodents), piercing the victim's body with the spikes for 1d8 hp damage. It then introduces acid

into the wounds by means of its tentacles. Each tentacle is hollow, much like an elephant's trunk, and is highly flexible. While some tentacles entwine around the prey in an effort to hold it still, others secrete acid, causing an additional 1d4 hp damage for the next 2d4 rounds. The acid is produced in the flumph's lower body cavity; anyone piercing a flumph's underside (AC 8) from below is hit with a shower of acid causing damage as noted above. The acid is highly potent, requiring active washing with 2-8 gallons of water or immersion in a swiftly-moving stream in order to remove it completely; simple immersion is not enough.

Once the prey is dead and the acid has had enough time to liquefy the creature partially, the flumph sucks up nutrients through its tentacles. In this respect it is similar to most spiders, whose venom liquefies the insides of its captured prey, allowing the spider to "drink" its victims.

6. The brain of a flumph—a small organ located just under the creature's upper shell, midway between its mouth and its rear rim hole—when pulverized, produces a liquid useful in the production of *potions of levitation*. One flumph brain provides enough liquid for three such potions.

The inner layer of hollow flumph tentacles can be removed and used as one of the ingredients for *oil of acid resistance*. It takes about 20 tentacles for one application of this magical oil.

The gland that stores the flumph's defensive spray can be used as an alternate material component for the *stinking cloud* spell. If used for this purpose, any flumphs within one mile of the spells effect have a 50% chance of investigating the *stinking cloud*.

busied himself in the back of the lab, digging through a pile of disorganized notes and books filled with his tiny scrawlings.

Buntleby pulled the flumph out of the sack and looked at it in the light of the laboratory, careful to keep it upside-down. It was entirely white, from the eyestalks to the tentacles. Even its short little spikes were a whitish-gray, although there were specks of dried blood staining a good number of them. Its eyes were a dark blue, almost black, and it looked at Buntleby with an unfathomable expression. Was it angry at its captivity? Curious? Frightened? Buntleby had no way to know.

"Look how long the eyestalks are," said Buntleby, holding up the flumph for his companions to see. "I wonder why they're so long?"

"By necessity, no doubt," suggested Willowquisp, looking up from his tome. "If it spends its life in the air and drops down on its prey, it would have to be able to see past its own body."

"Makes sense," admitted Buntleby. On a whim, he placed the inverted flumph on his own head, and held its eyestalks together under his chin. "Here we go," he said, "A new hat for Lady Ablastia." Tilting his head back so he could look down his nose at his companions, he scrunched his face into a lemon-sucking configuration and did his best Lady Ablastia imitation. "I'm sure you young men cannot possibly appreciate just how proper and fashionable my new headgear is. But of course, such is to be expected of the uncouth members of todays society."

Willowquisp chuckled and held out his hand, and Buntleby passed the flumph over to him, careful to keep it upside-down. Willowquisp tested the sharpness of the creature's spikes with his finger, and offered, "There are times I'd be sorely tempted to place



this little fellow, as is, on Dreelix's chair."

"That would be a sight!" agreed Buntleby, placing the flumph down on a chair and waggling his butt over it as if about to sit. Even Spontayne, normally slow to join in any jocularity, allowed a grin to cross his face as he pictured Dreelix sitting on a flumph.

Buntleby picked the creature back up, then examined its shell. "Hey, feel how hard the top is, compared to the bottom,"⁷ he said.

Spontayne gave a rap on the creature's top, then poked a finger into its squishy, pliant underside. The flumph responded with a squeaky "whee!" of exhaled air, as if ticklish. "Almost like a turtle's shell," he said. "Odd that they can fly with so much weight on top."

"No, really, it's not that heavy at all. Here, feel for yourself." Buntleby passed the creature over to his mentor.

"Amazingly light," agreed Spontayne.

"Perhaps the shell could be used in the construction of lightweight armor of some type."

"Possibly. Or maybe a buckler, or something." He took the creature back from Spontayne and carried it over to Zantoullios, who was buried in a pile of arcane formulae and research notes, many of which had spilled out onto the floor. "Hey, take a peek at this texture. Think we could fashion some sort of armor from this?"

Zantoullios spun around at the sound of Buntleby's voice. His oversized book of notes bumped the flumph out of Buntleby's hands, and the creature spilled onto the floor. At the same time Buntleby's foot slid on a loose scrap of paper, one of Zantoullios' escaped notes that now littered the floor of his lab. He went crashing to the floor, jarring his funny bone in the process.

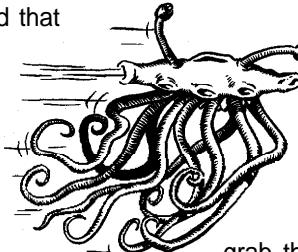
present, it can snap awake in an instant, although it does suffer a -2 penalty to its surprise roll if attacked while sleeping.

8. This noise is just incidental to the flumph's movement through the air and does not constitute a language. There is a flumph language, but it is a sign language based on tentacle and eyestalk movements, difficult for non-flumphs to learn and impossible for them to reproduce (short of using *polymorph* magic to take on the shape of a flumph themselves, or creating the illusion of a flumph and using it to do the "talking").

The flumph landed on its edge and began spinning across the floor like a runaway wheel. Zantoullios made a grab for it but slipped himself and landed hard on his face, shooting a stack of notes detailing the marvelous new uses he'd found for troglodyte bladders flying out behind him.

"Stop it!" Buntleby yelled, crawling to his feet. "Don't let it get away!"

Willowquisp and Spontayne looked up from the thick zoological tome Willowquisp had brought, to see the flumph barreling across the floor at them in a bee-line, tentacles splayed out on one side and eyestalks splayed out on the other. It hit Spontayne's foot and tipped over, wobbling in a



small circle along its circumference like a dropped coin between the two men.

"Look out!" yelled Zantoullios. "It's flipped up! Grab it, quick!"

Willowquisp bent over to grab the flumph. Spontayne did the same, and the sound of their heads colliding could be heard clear across the lab. Both staggered backward, and the flumph shot up into the air between them.

In an instant, the flumph reached a height of ten feet, well out of the range of the four humans below, where it teetered drunkenly and attempted to regain its balance. Spontayne staggered over and slammed the shutters closed on the lab window, preventing its escape. "Now what?" he asked.

"Got that butterfly net with you?" asked Zantoullios. Buntleby shook his head. "What about spells?"

Buntleby took a quick mental survey. "Nothing of use," he admitted. "You?"

"Sadly, no. Wait a minute, though, I've got an idea." He disappeared into a back room.

The flumph circled around the room slowly, eyestalks waving back and forth as it looked for a way out. It had apparently regained its equilibrium and

9. Flumphs have no regular feeding schedule. They almost always attack rodents on sight, regardless of how recently they have fed, leading some to believe that flumphs prefer a rodent diet, or that they were specifically bred as a farming aid to cut down on the rodent population. They will also eat small creatures such as lizards, frogs, and snakes, but given a choice will always go after rodents first. A flumph sees killing rats and mice as a sacred duty to be performed whenever possible.

7. A flumph's upper surface is AC 0. During the daylight hours, the creature often flies up into a tree and settles on a sturdy branch, wrapping its tentacles around the branch for support. This leaves its hard upper shell exposed while protecting its softer underside while it sleeps. The eyestalks are retractable and can be whipped into the creature's body quickly if necessary, but the flumph usually keeps them out and facing opposite directions while sleeping. Flumph sleep is very light, and the creature remains somewhat aware of its surroundings at all times. If danger is

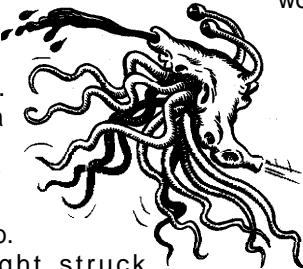
scooted about along a horizontal plane well out of reach of the humans below. The three Monster Hunters could hear a low whistling as air passed through its maneuvering jets.⁸ It glided aerially along one wall, did a quick pirouette, and floated along the next wall, eyestalks in constant motion. Suddenly, its eyes did a double-take, and in a burst of speed it maneuvered over to the far corner of the lab.

A sudden thought struck Buntleby. "Where's Ozzie?" he cried.

The flumph positioned itself over the osquip, making final adjustments as it aligned itself above its unwitting prey. "No!" screamed Buntleby as he leapt across the room toward his familiar?⁹

The two reached Ozzie at about the same moment. Buntleby curled protectively over his familiar, and the flumph ended up landing on Buntleby's shoulder. He felt a brief prick of pain as several of the creature's spikes penetrated the layers of his robe, but then the flumph, surprised by the loss of its prey, zoomed back up into the air.

It didn't get far. Zantoullios, brandishing a *staff of striking* he'd been meaning to recharge, gave a blood-curdling scream as he charged across the room and smacked the creature between the eyestalks. The flumph teetered and tottered in the air, wobbling crazily as it tried to regain its balance. Not surprisingly, it let loose with its defensive spray, catching Buntleby, Zantoullios, and Ozzie in their faces.



Zantoullios dropped his staff, recoiling in disgust.

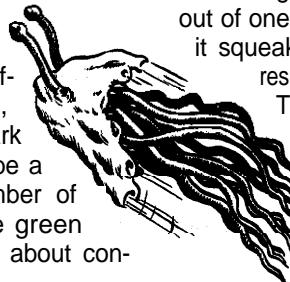
Spontayne made a grab for a wand on the worktable and tossed it over to Zantoullios. The gangly wizard caught it, spoke a command word, and the air became more breathable at once. The slim black wand had an inflatable bag at one end. As the bag filled with air, the stench became less and less noticeable. "Troglodyte bladder. Good thinking Spontayne." Spontayne merely grunted his agreement and went over to check on Buntleby. Zantoullios picked up his staff and looked up at the flumph, hovering just out of reach.

"So now what do we do?" asked Willowquisp.

There was a loud bang at the shuttered window. All eyes turned toward it, including those of the flumph.¹⁰ The shutters buckled once, twice, and then crashed open. To the Monster Hunters' amazement, a hammer-shaped field of energy floated into the room, followed by a pair of flumphs.

These flumphs were different-greenish-yellow, with tentacles shaded dark green. There seemed to be a considerably greater number of tentacles present on the green flumphs, and they waved about constantly.¹¹

The white flumph hovered up to the newcomers and performed an intricate series of movements with its tentacles and eyestalks, one tentacle



10. Although flumphs have no external ears, they do have a sense of hearing on a par with that of a human. They do, in fact, have four inner ears spaced equidistant around their bodies just below their maneuvering jets. They have an excellent sense of touch in the tips of their tentacles but a weak sense of smell (based on the mouth-like organ on their upper surface) and no sense of taste.

Their sense of smell is somewhat unique in its extreme sensitivity to one particular scent—the odor of their own defensive spray. A flumph is able to pick up that one scent from over a mile away. This means when a flumph uses its spray, it is also alerting all other flumphs in the immediate vicinity that a dangerous situation has arisen. Being lawful good creatures, any flumph picking up the defensive odor heads toward the scent to assist if it can.

11. Monastic flumphs are a higher order of flumph, able to cast priest spells as if they were clerics of equal level to their hit dice. At 2-5 HD, this gives them access to priest spells of first to third level. These spells are modified versions of the spells known to PCs, requiring only somatic gestures, which they perform with consummate skill with their numerous tentacles. Monastic

flumphs have a larger number of tentacles than do common flumphs; while this enables them to cast spells, it also leaves less room on their undersides for spikes, and as a result monastic flumphs cause only 1d6 hp damage instead of the common flumph's 1d8.

Little is known about the mysterious monastic flumphs. They gather together in large caverns to worship unknown, lawful good deities. Each monastic flumph society is called a "cloister," led by a 5-HD "abbot," 3- or 4-HD "priors" (one per six flumphs in the cloister), and a handful of 2-HD "monks." Cloisters commonly hold up to 32 individual monastic flumphs, who act as guardians for the common flumphs and pursue their own mysterious interests.

Most of what little is known of the monastic flumphs was documented by one Cartificant the Learned, a curious sage with a penchant for unusual field-work. It was he who gave the monastic flumphs their religious-based titles, and since so little has been written about the creatures, the terms "cloister," "abbot," "prior," and "monk" have become common usage in describing monastic flumph society.

Had Cartificant finished his field-work with the monastic flumphs (tragically, he was killed in a

rare butter-churning accident), he might have learned the true relationship between ordinary flumphs and the monastic variety. Monastic flumphs are not a higher order of flumph so much as "normal" flumphs are a lower order of monastic flumph—specifically, their idiot mutant children. About 10% of monastic flumph buds grow into albino flumphs. While these creatures are lower in intelligence and cannot cast spells, they are nonetheless cherished and looked after by the lawful good monastic flumphs. The albinos always breed true, so over time, the "normal" flumphs came to far outnumber the monastic ones.

12. Since monastic flumphs cast their spells using only somatic gestures with their many tentacles and also move their tentacles when communicating with others of their species, there is usually no warning for an outside observer that a monastic flumph is casting a spell.

13. A very few monastic flumphs (about 10%) have mastered the Common tongue or another verbal language. They do not speak often, and when they do it is in short bursts of words as they force air out of their rim holes. A speaking monastic flumph sounds like it just took in a lungful of helium and is trying to do a Mickey Mouse impression.

"Why fight?" asked the green flumph in its high-pitched voice.

"We were, uh, defending ourselves," he began.

The green flumph that had spoken pointed at the white flumph with a thin tentacle. "Why attack?" it demanded in its squeaky voice.

"Well, he started it! He attacked one of my osquips!"

The flumph swung its eyestalks to stare down at Ozzie. "Kill vermin."

"Ozzie's not vermin! He's my familiar and my friend!" As if understanding the flumph's motives, Ozzie prudently scooted behind Buntleby's feet and hid from the hovering creatures.

The flumph swung its eyes back to Buntleby. "Not vermin?" it asked, surprised.

"Definitely not!"

"Not vermin?" it asked again. The green flumph pointed his two eyeballs at each other in confusion, then seemed to give a mental shrug. It pointed a tentacle at its white-skinned cousin, and said, "Not hat."

Buntleby felt his cheeks burn crimson as embarrassment crept over his face. "Yes, well, I'm sorry about that," he mumbled.

"Not cushion. No sit."

Buntleby's face grew even redder.

"Look, I think there's been a terrible misunderstanding on both our parts. I apologize for the way we've treated your friend here, and I see now that no harm was meant on your part toward my osquips, too. How about we just admit to our misunderstandings and each go our own separate ways?"

The flumphs stared at the Monster Hunters for a few seconds, then turned and wagged tentacles at each other. "Agreed," said the flumph spokesman. With a puff of air, it swiveled around on its central axis and jetteted out the window, the other two creatures following behind it.

Movement returned to the other Monster Hunters. "Well I'll be," remarked Zantoullios. "I think we were just scolded. What were those things, his parents?"

"Unlikely," Willowquisp replied, flipping through his book once again. "Flumphs have but a single parent—they reproduce asexually by budding, once every two years or so. No, I believe they were a different type of flumph altogether. My tome here hints at a race of spellcasting flumphs, and I think that's what we just saw."

"So the little white guy just got rescued by two of his more powerful cousins," remarked Buntleby, bending down to his familiar and stroking him behind the ears.

"And I'd say we were lucky at that," said Willowquisp, flipping quickly through his book in search of a particular page.

"We got off easy in only having to deal with a spell-using flumph; we could have been facing one of these, instead!" Finding the page he was after, he flipped the book around so his friends could see.

The picture showed a creature that looked like nothing so much as a giant brain, from which grew a parrot-like beak and ten long tentacles. From the way it was drawn on the page, it was obvious that the creature was hovering in mid-air.

Another creature believed to be related to the flumph is the belabrah, or "tangler." Somewhat more primitive than either the flumph or the grell, the jellyfish-shaped creature cannot levitate or fly, but instead glides after a springing leap that can take it 60 yards at a time. The creature has 12 rubbery tentacles, a hard, bony upper shell, and four dorsal eyestalks. Further evidence of flumph ancestry is the fact that when a tentacle is severed, the creature sprays its blood at enemies, which has a debilitating effect on them. Belabrah also reproduce through budding, as do flumphs. Many sages believe the belabrah to be a precursor to both the flumph and grell species. Further information on belabrah can be found in *MC3: FORGOTTEN REALMS® Appendix*, under "Belabrah (Tangler)."

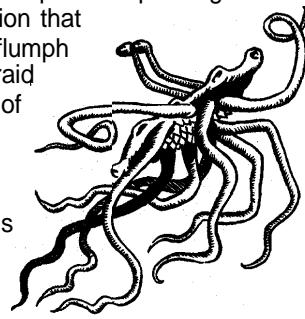
"A grell?" asked Buntleby. "I've never heard of them."¹⁴

"You're lucky never to have met one," said Zantoullios. "I don't think we'd have got off so easy if it was a couple of grell that burst in here."

There was silence for awhile, as each Monster Hunter reflected on what had just occurred. Finally, Zantoullios broke the silence.

"Actually, I'd prefer explaining to the Association that

we lost our flumph to a daring raid by a couple of nasty grell, rather than admit that the four of us were bested by a little green.



flumph," he said with a squeaky voice.

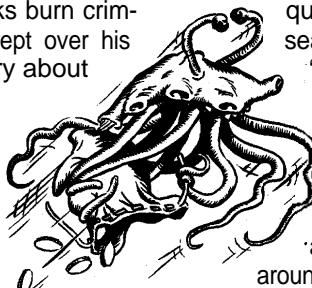
"Good point," admitted Buntleby, rubbing his sore shoulder.

"I think," suggested Willowquisp, "that after much investigation, we decided that flumphs are unsuitable for magical experimentation, and we let him go free."

"I like it," said Spontayne.

"Me too," agreed Buntleby.

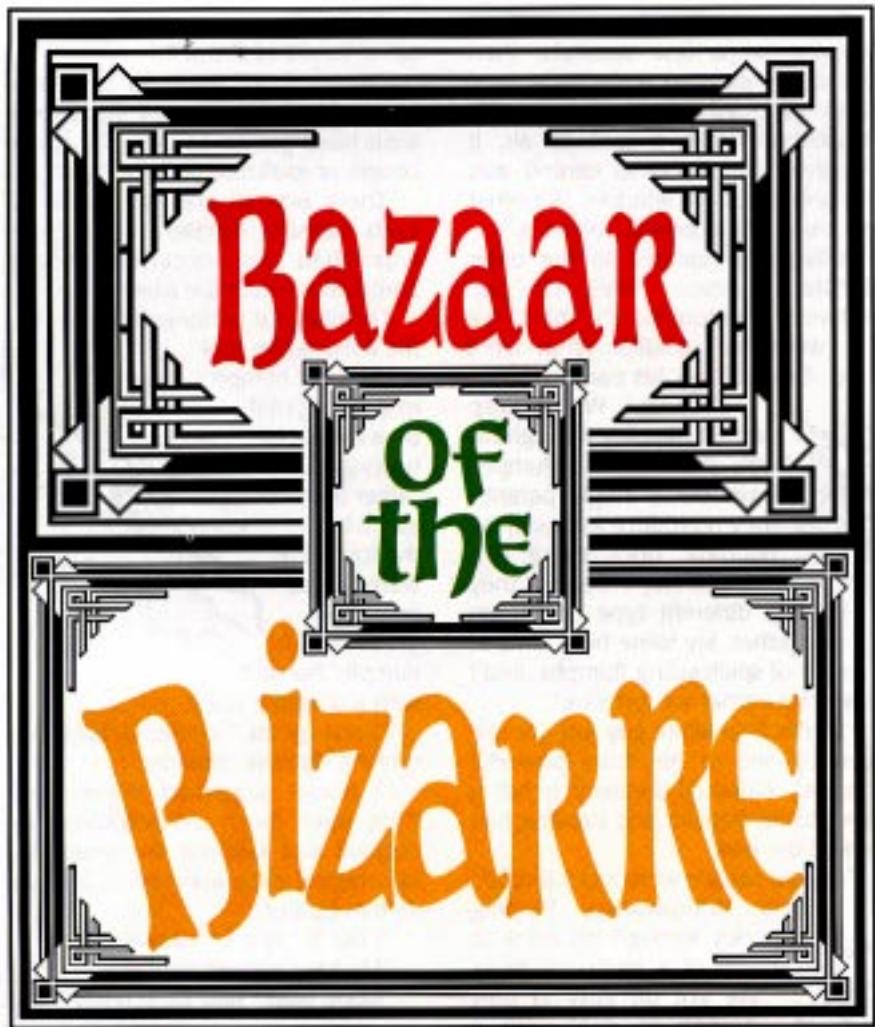
"Good plan," said Zantoullios.



Johnathan M. Richards says he is very familiar with the concept of the nauseating smell, since he grew up living across from a mushroom farm that brought in compost daily by the truckload, and currently lives downwind from a meat-rendering facility.

The best guess regarding the flumph's origins, taking into account its probable genetic ties to the grell, is that flumphs originate from a different world. They may have traveled on grell spelljamming vessels (perhaps by design, but more likely without the grells' knowledge) and disembarked onto their new planet. Or, for that matter, it might have only been a single (monastic) flumph—since they reproduce asexually, it would only take a single flumph to found an entire race on a new world.

If this theory is true, it might also explain the "normal" flumph's existence—perhaps the albino mutation came about as a result of some subtle difference between this world and the monastic flumph's original home world.



Cauldrons and Cookery

by B.A. Landires

illustrated by Bob Klasnich

COOKING UTENSILS are mundane items that most PCs overlook as treasures. Fantasy literature includes many magical cauldrons and other cooking items. Here are a few more domestic magical items to spice up your game. Unless noted otherwise, all of these items radiate a faint aura of magic.

Bowl of Plentiful Porridge

These small bowls have lids that keep the magically created porridge steaming hot. The bowl never goes empty of porridge, and will provide a nourishing meal to one and all. However, no matter what is added to the mushy meal, nothing can alter its bland taste.

These items are also cursed. Anyone who eats from a *bowl of plen-*

tiful porridge completely loses all sense of taste and smell. Only a *remove curse* spell can alter this effect.

XP Value: 100 **CP Value:** 400

Cauldron of Dreams

These items were created for the express purpose of enhancing dreams. By brewing a mixture of honey, strong liqueur, a crushed 500 gp gemstone, and powdered bone in one of these *cauldrons*, a potion is created. The potion must be consumed immediately, for it loses its power one round after it is ready. Drinking the potion puts the user into a catatonic slumber that lasts 2d6 hours. During this state, the drinker experiences one of the following effects:

1d100	Effect
01-09	Victims suffers memory loss, losing 1d6 ($\times 1,000$) XPs and all spells.
10-25	Horrible nightmares give the victim an acute phobia related to his past.
26-35	Nightmares cause extreme headaches for 1d6 days. Concentration is impossible.
36-45	Victim suffers from paranoia, fearing and suspecting everybody and everything.
46-50	Acute insomnia results for 2d8 days. Cumulative -1 to Constitution after third day.
51-60	Makes contact with dead friends and family.
61-75	Dreams reveal hints that can lead to gaining wealth.
76-85	The location of an abandoned magical item is revealed.
86-90	User gains 1d6 ($\times 1,000$) XP through dream experiences.
91-95	Beneficial dreams that warn of immediate dangers in the near future.
96-99	<i>Contact other plane</i> , as the fifth-level Wizard spell, gives beneficial lore.
100	<i>Astral form</i> , as the seventh-level Priest spell.

Using a *cauldron of dreams* gives the victim a 10% cumulative chance of becoming obsessed with the item. Those that become obsessed stop at nothing to continue creating the special potions and drinking them. Only a *remove curse* or more powerful magic can free the victim of the addiction.

XP Value: 5,000 **GP Value:** 20,000

Cauldron of Gateways

This rare item creates a gate leading to any destination on the same plane in which the cauldron is located. To call forth the gate, the user must bring fresh water to a steaming boil in the *cauldron* and add soil from the desired destination to the brew. By speaking the command words "I demand a path," the user opens a gate, creating a translucent image of the location in the steam. Stepping through the steam transports individuals to the origin of the soil, as long as

it belongs to the same plane of existence. The *gate* remains open for 2d6 turns before closing. A being that is caught in the gate when it closes or opens must make a successful Dexterity check or be severed in half, resulting in instant death. It is not possible to bring the cauldron through its own *gate*. Such cauldrons may be used only once per week. Beyond that, they work quite well as regular cooking cauldrons.

XP Value: 10,000 **GP Value:** 40,000

Cauldron of the Magi

Only one such cauldron is known to exist. The knowledge of its creation has long since been forgotten. Some claim that it is cursed, while those who have gained from the cauldron praise its value. The item is neither good nor evil, but it may only be used by wizards. Runes carved into the rim of the cauldron list the recipe necessary to activate its power: one pint of blood from the user, the web of a giant spider, a vial of holy water, a vial of unholy water, powdered hair from one hundred unrelated sentient beings, powdered bone from three dead wizards of 9th-level or greater and an ancient coin.

All of these ingredients must be combined and brought to a boil in the cauldron. The brew must be consumed still boiling, causing 1d6 hp damage from scalding. There is a 45% base chance that the recipe activates the cauldron's ability. This chance can be cumulatively increased by 10% for each successful cooking, herbalism, or spellcraft check (one check per proficiency), if the wizard has and uses the abilities. If the recipe check is successful, then the resulting brew radiates a strong aura of magic. If the check is unsuccessful, then the resulting brew becomes a powerful toxin. It causes death to the user that drinks it, unless a saving throw vs. poison is made. The same applies automatically to anyone who drinks of any brew that is not the single blood donor.

Consuming a successfully brewed recipe links the activating wizard to a higher consciousness that opens his mind to the collective knowledge of all sentient beings. Through the webs of fate that tie everything past and present together, the wizard experiences the memories and thoughts of others, as though they were his own. One of the following effects occurs:



1d100 Effect

- 01-05** A temporal rift occurs, irreversibly swallowing the victim and erasing him from existence.
- 06-15** Victim suffers massive amnesia. All XPs and spells lost.
- 16-25** Memory lost. All spells must be relearned.
- 26-30** Memory gaps. Lose 1d6 (x1,000) XPs and half memorized spells.
- 31-40** Forget all proficiencies.
- 41-45** Permanently lose 1 point from Intelligence.
- 46-60** Gain the knowledge of 1d6 first-level spells.
- 61-75** Gain the knowledge of 1d4 second-level spells.
- 76-85** Gain the knowledge of 1d4 third-level spells.
- 86-90** Gain the knowledge of two fourth-level spells.
- 91-99** Gain the knowledge of one fifth-level spell.
- 100** Victim must make a System Shock check or die from the overload of information. If successful, then user gains all benefits from #46-99, above.

Any spells gained by the use of the cauldron should be determined randomly or by the DM. These spells are considered learned and may be written down in the wizard's spell book.

A *restoration* spell can be used to restore any one of the following: lost memory, spellcasting ability, proficiencies, or Intelligence points.

XP Value: 20,000 **GP Value:** 60,000

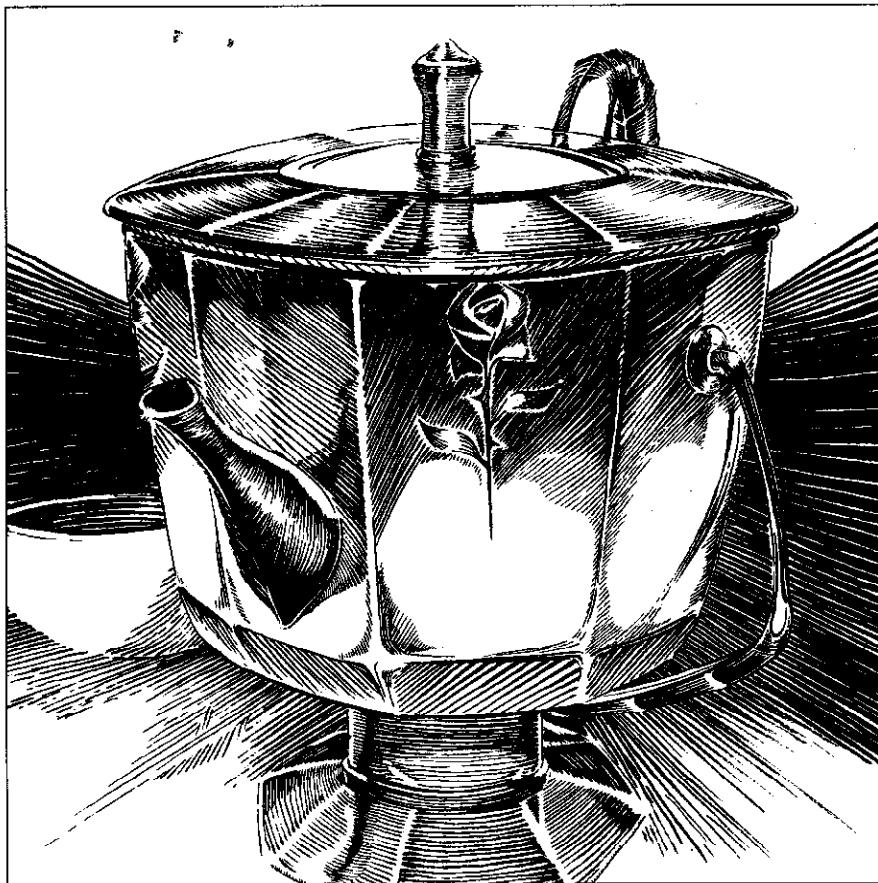
Cauldron of Planar Travel

This massive pot functions exactly as the *cauldron of gateways*. However, in addition to all the above abilities and restrictions, *cauldrons of planar travel* allow the user to travel between the planes of existence. Extra-planar soil cast into the steaming boil creates a gate between the planes to the point of its origin.

XP Value: 20,000 **GP Value:** 80,000

Chamber Pot of Concealment

Although having nothing to do with cookery, it does provide a means for the afterthoughts of such culinary delights. These magical containers have an appropriate permanent visual and olfactory illusion cast on them that deters most trespassers. A *chamber pot of concealment* alters spacial



dimensions, creating a 3' x 3' x 3' area of storage space within itself. They are ideal for hiding those precious items that must be left behind in one's room.

XP Value: 50 GP Value: 200

Cleavers by Grog

These orc-forged blades range from the smallest paring knife (1d2 hp damage) to gigantic double-handed cleavers (1d8+1 hp damage). They function equally well in both the cave kitchen and in battle. Although the cleavers provide no attack bonuses, they are magically enhanced to spice meat as they cut through. Meat cut with one of these blades is quite tasty.

A wound caused by a *cleaver by Grog* causes an additional 1 hp damage per round unless washed clean (with a maximum of one turn or 10 rounds of damage per wound).

XP Value: 400 GP Value: 1,200

Cookbook of Uzul

Anyone using this magical cookbook gains the cooking and herbalism non-weapon proficiencies with a +2 modifier. Meals prepared while using this cookbook cannot be poisoned in any way.

XP Value: 500 GP Value: 2,000

Victims who fail their saving throws have no recollection of the encounter with the *cauldron* or its user.

XP Value: 3,000 GP Value: 12,000

Everful Jug of Lard

Just as the name implies, these are magical jugs that create thick cooking lard. The lard is too thick to be poured from the vessel and must be scooped out. If heat is applied to one of these jugs, it loses its magical ability. The grease created by the jug is flammable. Although these magical devices were created for cooking, the lard can be put to less practical purposes. If it is spread over a smooth surface, it acts as a first-level Wizard's spell *grease*, until it is cleaned up.

XP Value: 300 GP Value: 1,200

Jan Jo's Tea Kettle

Plain water brought to a boil in this silver kettle becomes a mint-flavored tea. Drinking the liquid removes all fatigue and relieves the person of the need for a night's sleep.

The kettle's second function is revealed when used to boil belladonna herbs. The resulting tea has the ability to cure lycanthropy. Any lycanthrope drinking the concoction must make a System Shock check. If successful, the disease is fully cured. If the System Shock check fails, the lycanthrope dies. Jan Jo guaranteed that the magical kettle would cure lycanthropy one way or another.

The last power of the kettle is activated when mint leaves and honey are boiled within. Doing so creates 1d4 cups of a tea that acts as a *potion of healing* (curing 2d4+1 hp per cup) if consumed immediately. This function may only be used once per day.

XP Value: 1,000 GP Value: 4,000

Medicine Spoon

These *spoons* appear to be well-worn eating utensils. When honey is held in the *medicine spoon* and the command word "heal" is spoken, the power of the spoon is revealed. The honey becomes a noxious liquid that can *cure disease*, as the third-level Priest spell. The *medicine spoon* can create only one such dose per day.

XP Value: 700 GP Value: 2,500

Pepper of the Pyrolisk

This appears to be a small pouch of cooking pepper with 1d6 pinches of spice inside. If eaten the victim must

make a saving throw vs. poison or suffer 2d6 hp damage from internal burning per pinch. Only half damage is suffered if the saving throw is made. The magical pepper was accidentally created by a wizard who entered a cooking contest. He wanted something that would make his chili "knock people's socks off." *The pepper of the pyrolisk* did just that, as the victims kicked around in death throes after eating the enchanted chili.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 2,000

Salts of Dehydration

This appears to be a pouch of normal table salt. The average pouch contains 1d6 pinches of the cursed spice. When consumed, the victim must make a saving throw vs. poison or die an agonizing death as all body fluids are completely dehydrated. Even if a successful save is made, the victim suffers 2d6 hp damage per dose eaten. A *neutralize poison* spell prevents death if cast within one round.

These salts were originally created by an alchemist, who was researching a remedy for a giant slug infestation. (Used against such creatures, each pinch of salt inflicts 2d6 hp damage on contact.) Since then, the formula was stolen and has become a very useful assassin's tool.

XP Value: 500 **GP Value:** 2,000

Salt & Pepper Shakers of Ogg

The salt shaker is a carved wooden statuette of a smiling man with an exposed belly. Salt stored and used from this container acts as a *neutralize poison* spell to any food to which it is liberally applied.

The pepper shaker is identical in appearance to the salt shaker except that the carved man is frowning. Pepper stored and shaken from this container poisons food. If the peppered food is consumed, then a saving throw vs. poison is necessary to avoid a painful death. If the saving throw succeeds, then the victim is immune to that particular *pepper shaker of Ogg*.

Each shaker holds enough pepper to sprinkle on 1d4+11 dishes.

XP Value: 400* **GP Value:** 1,000*

*These values are for the set. Halve the values for single shakers. DMs may award no XPs for recovering the pepper shaker, but XPs should be given for identifying its true nature.



Seame Cauldron

By boiling soil taken from a specific location, a person can create a window to that area. Anyone looking into the boiling water can see and hear the area as the third-level Wizard spells *clairvoyance* and *clairaudience*. This effect lasts for 1d10 rounds and is useable twice/day. These massive cauldrons are very difficult to move, as most of them exceed 600 lbs.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

Spatula of Lifting

These items were created by a benevolent wizard to eliminate heavy lifting in the kitchen. When the command words "heave ho" are spoken, an object up to 500 lbs. may be magically manipulated telekinetically by gesturing with the *spatula*. Treat the item as though it was scooped up by a 4' x 4' area *Tenser's floating disc*, as the first-level Wizard spell. The targeted item must remain within 10 feet of the *spatula*. Using a *spatula of lifting*, a particularly inventive halfling learned how to flip an opponent like a flap-jack. "It's all in the wrist." The target is entitled to a save vs. spell to negate the effect.

XP Value: 2,000 **GP Value:** 8,000

Spirit Cauldron

This massive cooking pot weighs 300-600 lbs. Swirling designs decorate its wrought iron belly. The powers of the *spirit cauldron* are activated when the skull of a sentient being is boiled within. The steam rising from the boiling brew assumes the shape of the person or creature to whom that skull belonged. If the liquid is sipped once, then the drinker may ask the summoned spirit 1d6 questions. The spirit's knowledge is limited to what it knew when it was living and what it has learned in the spirit realm. It is not compelled to answer truthfully.

If the spirit is evil, it tries to trick the user into drinking from the cauldron a second time. If the same brew is sipped more than once, then a curse causes the steam to become a haunt (MM/186). The haunt attacks and attempts to possess the cursed individual, pursuing the victim until destroyed.

XP Value: 4,000 **GP Value:** 12,000



This is Bobby's first article, and he thanks his wife Lorie for helping to make his dream come true.



The Wizards Three

The Night it Wailed Wizards

by Ed Greenwood

illustrated by David Day

STORM WINDS HOWLED past the house. On all sides I could hear the ominous creakings of tree limbs that weren't enjoying themselves. Rain rattled on the kitchen windows, clawing at the glass to be let in. I glanced around the study one last time, lit the candles, and headed for my new hiding place: a sleeping bag, a foam mattress, and a mound of pillows under the china cabinet. The wizards were beginning to make a habit of arriving early.

The massive old cabinet was as big (and probably as heavy) as a small car. The waist-high space between its legs that customarily housed a low bench and some nesting tables (now languishing in the darkness under the back stairs) would be my home for the evening—hopefully one more comfy than the old suit of armor. My privacy would be ensured by a friend's old footpump portable organ, making a temporary stopover in my study, standing squarely in front of the cabinet while I tried to stay absolutely silent behind it. I'd already dusted the acre or so of crawling I'd have to do under the sideboard to get into my little lair—where a bottle of water and some sandwiches lay waiting.

Oh, the things I do for my fellow gamers. Hardwood floors are hard on the elbows, and I'm not getting any slimmer.

I'd scarcely reached my destination, settled myself thankfully amid the soft pillows, and checked my three tape recorders, when the world exploded.

Blue-white lightning cracked across the study, crawling through the air above my nose! It was suddenly the only light in the place. The candlelight had sunk, and darkness rushed in as the lightning failed. My hair was standing on end, my ears and nose and fingertips all tingling.

Then a high-pitched screaming rose above the muffled roar of the storm. It banked somewhere overhead, then the disturbance came wailing down the chimney, paying not the slightest attention to chimney-caps and closed dampers in its wild plunge.

The wailing grew ear-splitting, echoed around the study, and then broke off abruptly into sobs, accompanied by a somewhat gruff male voice—Mordenkainen of Greyhawk, trying to be gentle—saying, "There, there. We're safely out of it now, and brought nary a drop down in here with us."

"Gods, master, that bolt blazed right through me! My heart shudders and burns within me—as hot as if it were cooking over a hearth!" The sound of ragged breathing followed, and then, in lower tones, Rautheene added, "I feel ill."



"Sit, then, and drink this." I heard a decanter clink past its fellows on the sideboard; my best old sherry, if I knew the mage of Oerth's tastes. "There's a plant over there by the fireplace, if illness overcomes you. I can't think its appearance can be made worse by anything."

Rautheene merely gasped, and a moment later I heard her swallowing, again and again, as if she was pouring sherry down her throat. Come to think of it, without the benefit of a glass, she probably was.

"Just look at me," she gasped, a moment later. "Gown singed half off, hair in a mess—what'll the Old Mage think of me?"

"That you look positively stunning," two voices said in perfect chorus. One belonged to Mordenkainen, and the other, of course . . .

"Well met, Elminster," the mage of Greyhawk said formally. "It's certainly more placid in here than out of doors, just now."

"With all that wailing out of the way, to be sure," the Old Mage agreed, as he melted out of the wall inches from my feet and turned to help himself to another decanter. "Healthy lungs, lass. Your first spell to be torn awry by a storm?"

"My first flight spell," Rautheene replied, with just a hint of a pout in her voice, as the candlelight grew brighter again.

"Ah, I envy thee. The thrill of rattling down a chimney entirely out of control, borne along on thy runaway Art like a thundering flood!"

"Lord mage, pray don't remind me," Rautheene replied. I could feel her shudder clear through the organ. "I've known my share of storms—I used to run and play in them, when I was little—but this was . . . terrifying."

"Good, good," Elminster said briskly. "A little terror's a wonderful thing. Gives one a proper appetite for all thi—by the twinkle in Mystra's eyes! Can these be macadamia nuts? And roast almonds, in the garlic butter?"

"I haven't yet noticed," Rautheene responded, a trifle coldly.

"Easy, lady," said Mordenkainen, chuckling. "You live—yon plant lives, unblemished—and Elminster has the right of it: eat up, calm yourself, and forget your fright. It could have been a disaster, but it wasn't. I was there to steer us when you were aflame and spitting lightnings out your nose!"

"Ohhh, if only that branch hadn't whirled out of the way, just before we ..." Rautheene's voice trailed away in dawning realization. "You—"

"My Lord Mordenkainen," Elminster said around a mouthful of nuts, "I can't help but notice thy apprentices of late seem to be fading from those of the days of yore, at least in the matter of articulation. They seem to gasp and gulp and stammer and trail away quite a lot, don't ye agree? Hmmph. Ye'd think they'd never seen an archmage pretending to be a branch before, wouldn't ye?"

"That's how you like to enjoy storms, I take it?" Mordenkainen asked. A glass was set down on the table, and his voice was grimmer in its wake. "From what we've managed to learn of Dalamar thus far, he might have tasted storms that make this one seem the lightest of breezes. Something truly awesome seems to have wracked Krynn."

"My own fleeting magical probings glimpsed nothing beyond the swirling chaos," Elminster replied soberly. "I'd wondered why. Another cataclysm could do it, aye."

The sherry decanter clinked again, and Rautheene said, "My apologies, lord mages both, for a less-than-cheery opening to this stormy evening's meeting."

"They are accepted, of course, lass," Elminster and Mordenkainen said in unison once more—and then chuckled at doing so. Together, of course.

"Rautheene's agreed to look into the fate of our comrade Dalamar," Mordenkainen added gently. "Her undertaking might well ultimately involve a journey to Krynn—when she's ready to handle the very worst."

"Storm lightning, that sort of thing," Elminster agreed casually. A moment later, I heard an astonishing thing: Rautheene growling at him, like an angry dog.

The two old mages must have exchanged glances, for the next thing I heard was Mordenkainen murmuring apologetically, "Apprentices, these days . . ."

"I—" Rautheene began furiously, and then blurted, "You need not—"

Pipesmoke wafted in my direction; I was sure that, could I see him, I would observe the Old Mage puffing unconcernedly.

"What I mean to say—" Rautheene tried again.

"Articulate indeed," Mordenkainen agreed. "Even-tempered, too. Pass the artichokes, good Lady Apprentice?"

"Impressive growl, that," Elminster agreed.

There was a snort, followed by a weak rendition of Rautheene's laugh, for the first time this evening. Under the cabinet, I relaxed at last and reached for a sandwich. Grilled cheese, and my—

It was gone. I groped for it in growing bewilderment, peering this way and that in the near-darkness. Dancing candles don't give off great light, but then the sandwiches didn't have much place to hide. They shoul—

"Allow me to offer ye a trio of very special sandwiches," Elminster said graciously then. "Grilled cheese, from our host's private stock—intended for his mouth alone, I can confidently say."

"More than that," Mordenkainen added, "there's dessert. Why, can it be? Yes! Smoked salmon doused in pralines'n'cream ice cream."

A curious choked giggle dissolved into unmistakable sobs. "You're—" Rautheene managed after a while, "you're a pair of old beasts!" Fresh tears swallowed the rest of her words.

"Apprentices, these days," murmured Mordenkainen and Elminster in comfortable unison, then chuckled again.

Remind me never to let archwizards try to comfort or mollify anybody when they are near my dinner.



For Your Campaign

In the morning, I found Elminster's copies of the spells the Three had exchanged—a trio each of first-level useful magics that Mordenkainen dubbed "apprentice tools" and Elminster called "the stock-in-trade of us all." The spells lay in the four large and otherwise utterly and pristinely empty tubs in my freezer that had been full of ice cream before wizards had come wailing down my chimney. Pralines'n'cream, of course.

Each of those tubs was as big as my head! Disbelievingly, I hurried back to the study and checked the plant, just in case. (It was unscathed.) Sheesh.

Wizards, these days . . .



Beneath the Surface

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: Special

Save: None

This spell causes any one surface directly touched by the caster to become transparent to the caster's gaze. The surface may be of any size (such as a wall, or huge castle door) so long as it is one continuous piece no thicker than three inches. The magic cannot penetrate two surfaces, so it is foiled by a tapestry on the other side of a door, or even the two surfaces of a hollow-core door.

This spell is commonly used to allow a caster to see who or what is on the other side of a door or to look "through" a tabletop for cheating at games or thievery. The surface seems transparent only to the casters gaze, not to others', and the magical sight provided by a *beneath the surface* spell cannot penetrate living things or the secretions of living things (such as spilled blood, gray ooze, and so on). The casters gaze functions normally with respect to distance, available light, and so on, so staring into a closed, lightless box shows the caster only impenetrable darkness.

The material component of this spell is a 4"-diameter piece of mica.

Blade of Memory

(Evocation)

Level: 1

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Special

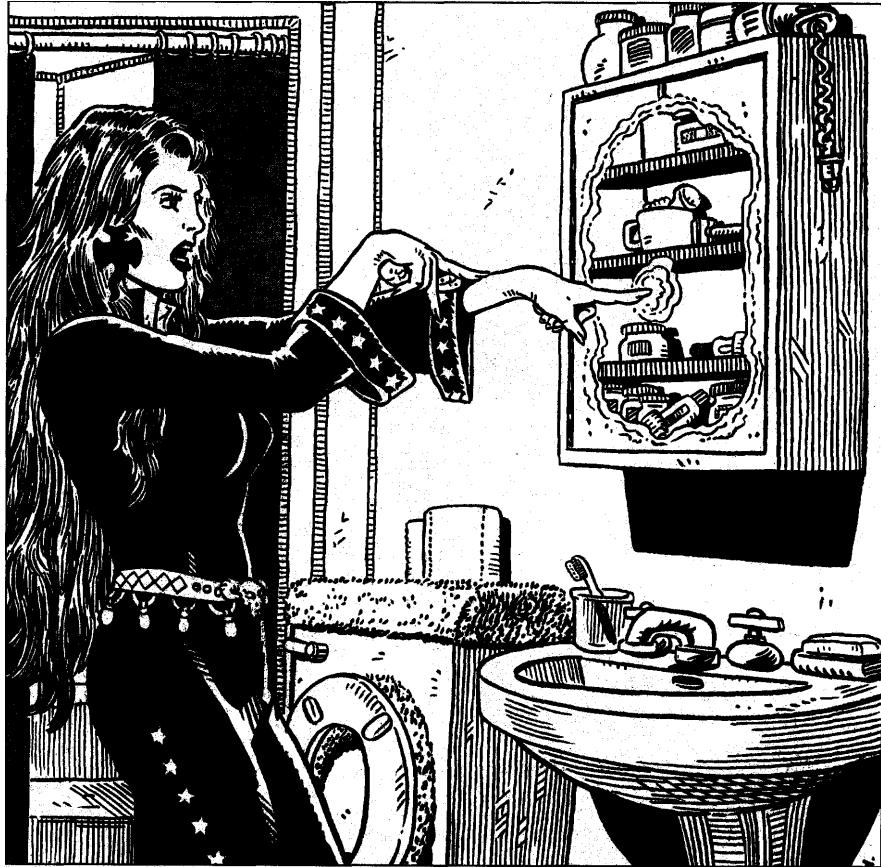
Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: Special

Save: None

This spell can take effect at any time after casting (unless the caster dies, is affected by a *dispel magic* enchantment, or wills the spell to lapse so as to memorize another one in its place). It consumes as its material component any edged weapon that the caster has the strength and reach to wield one-handed. Proficiency in the weapon is not necessary.

At any time after casting the caster can activate' the *blade of memory* spell by speaking a single trigger word, which brings a ghostly replica of the



weapon into being in the casters hand. This translucent "phantom" blade can be seen by all, but it is intangible. It can't be felt or dropped, won't conduct electricity or magnetic forces, can't cut objects of any sort, and can't parry or even bump into things. It is solid only against one intended target, chosen by the caster at the time of activation.

Against its target, a *blade of memory* is +4 to hit on the round of activation, +3 on the next round, +2 on the third round, +1 on the fourth, and then it vanishes. It causes normal damage for its weapon type, and it can't leave the caster's hand—it can't be thrown, changed from hand to hand, or given to another. The caster of a *blade of memory* can will it out of existence instantly at any time but cannot cause it to "wink out" and then reappear.

Brester's Beam of Light

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round/level

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: Special

Save: None

This spell allows its caster to "snare" an existing beam of light (cast through a chink, narrow opening, or shaft by an existing light source), and bend it to "shoot" in another direction. The caster can make only one bend in the shaft of light, but that bend can be adjusted by the caster at any time during the spell duration, as often as desired, by touching the illuminated path and willing an adjustment.

This spell is usually used to cast light into an otherwise dark area to allow others to see what they're doing but it can also be used as a signal or a means to make sunlight contact a monster. It is rarely capable of blinding creatures unless their nature or the situation makes it so effective. It can't be used to affect gaze attacks, the light in a brightly-lit area (i.e., where no definite "beam" of light is present), or magical effects that are visible beams (such as several spells that bring into being "ruby rays").

Onsible's Key

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 3 rounds



Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: A key

Save: None

This spell enables its caster temporarily to alter an existing key to fit another lock of roughly the same size. The "real" key can't be more than twice nor less than half the size of the altered one. The wizard must be able to touch both key and lock but need not be familiar with how the lock opens.

The magic changes the shape of the key but not its appearance (i.e., different flanges, and the like, are invisible). When the altered key is touched to the lock, its chance of opening the lock is equal to 65% plus the caster's level. In the three rounds before the key lapses back into its true shape, three opening attempts can be made; if any succeeds, the door can't be locked again until the spell expires.

If the lock is connected to any sort of trap or as-yet-unleashed magic, and the caster is the one who touches the altered key to it, the caster will instantly be made aware of the trap's existence—but not its nature (unless, of course, mere contact is enough to trigger the trap). Other beings using the key won't receive this warning.

The material component of this spell is an amount of steel (shavings, fragments, or a whole item) larger than the key to be altered.

Runefinger

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 1

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 hour/level

Casting Time: 6

Area of Effect: Special

Save: None

This spell causes one of the caster's fingers to appear to flicker with a blue-white flame. (No actual heat or flame is produced.) At will, the caster can cause patterns traced in the air or on a surface by the finger to glow, remaining in place for the spell duration either (chosen during casting) moving with breezes or the movement of an object its traced upon, or remaining stationary despite changing conditions around it.

These glowing patterns can't be active magical runes, sigils, symbols, or glyphs, but they can have the appearance of genuine magic, either as instructions to another spellcaster (to cast or use a particular spell, per-

haps, or to draw a symbol exactly like this one), or as a ruse to fool intruders. This spell is often used to draw directing arrows or spell out clear (or misleading) inscriptions. Its magic enables the caster to cause the lines made by certain finger movements to glow and other traceries not to, so clear and concise symbols can be created, not an endless squiggly line that "builds up" into one symbol after another.

The material component of this spell is a pinch of powdered glow-worm, a live firefly, or a bit of phosphorescent fungus.

Smashing Strike

(Alteration, Necromancy)

Level: 1

Range: 0

Components: V

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: Special

Save: None

This spell calls upon and drains away another spell of any sort that the caster has already memorized (the magic is wasted, without effect, if no such spell exists).

A *smashing strike* augments any one physical attack made by the caster (barehanded or weapon, but its effects are lost if applied to any sort of missile attack). This spell fails if the attack to be aided is made with an enchanted weapon or is already in some way enhanced by magic. The caster can be invisible or flying as a result of magic, and these would not be considered aiding the specific attack, even if these conditions allowed the caster to strike with surprise, or reach a good location for launching the attack; however, a *smashing strike* fails if applied to an attack that already has a magical bonus of any sort.

If the drained spell is of first to fourth level, a *smashing strike* lends attack and damage bonuses equal to the level of the drained spell, plus two, so a fourth-level spell gains a +6 bonus. If the drained spell is of fifth through seventh level, the augmentation is the spell level plus 1, so a fifth-level spell also confers a +6 bonus. If the drained spell is 8th or 9th level, the bonus is just the spell level. This diminishing bonus is due to "leakage" of magical energies beyond what the simple *smashing strike* enchantment can handle; these extra energies are lost (though at least one mage—



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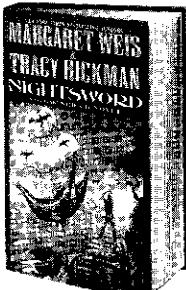
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Mordenkainen—is at work on another spell to convert them to instantaneous healing energies for the caster and “spill out” as momentary spectacular blue-white mists and bursts of light surrounding the caster.)

The aided attack must be launched immediately following casting (or the spell is lost) and occurs at the end of the same round in which the *smashing strike* was cast.

Standfast

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 2

Area of Effect: Special

Save: None

This spell causes a fraying rope, breaking branch, or collapsing door to hold for one additional round. An unlocked door affected by the spell fails to open for one round, a smashed glass container shatters all over its surface but does not break apart and spill its contents for one round, and so on.

A *standfast* spell can't hold in the face of any hostile magic (a knockspell applied to a door, breakage caused by

the blast of a *fireball*, and so on), nor can it affect any living creatures or undead. It temporarily prevents movement or collapse, but isn't a “hold” spell that locks or freezes things in place.

If a *standfast* spell is cast on a golem or other magically-animated automaton (such as a helmed horror), it does not cause one round of endurance but instead deals the construct 3d4 hp damage (no saving throw).

The material component of a *standfast* spell is a piece of granite, a lump of adamantine ore, or a fragment (or pinch of shavings) of adamantine.

Tanatha's Melt

(Alteration)

Level: 1

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1 round

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: Special

Save: None

This spell turns ice to water in one round and thaws frozen items or portions of such items. (The spell can affect a maximum volume equal to that of the caster's own head.) The spell affects materials as if torchfire was applied to them for a prolonged

period, without causing them to ignite, scorch or burn. The spell cannot melt stone or any substance that could not be melted by torchfire.

If used as a touch attack in battle, an attack roll is required. The melt causes 1d2 hp damage, 1d6 hp to cold-based creatures. It can never harm undead, regardless of their nature or the circumstances.

The material component of a *Tanatha's melt* is a pinch of ashes from a fire, saltpeter, or phosphorous.

Tentacled Visage

(Illusion/Phantasm)

Level: 1

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 4 rounds

Casting Time: 5

Area of Effect: The casters face

Save: None

This spell causes the casters face to sprout writhing tentacles—either growing out of it and reaching outward, or coming up from below (i.e., out of the casters bodice or shirtfront) to attack the face.

The caster determines which of the two versions of the spell occurs and also determines the size, number, hue, and appearance (scaled, slimy, rotting, etc.) of both the tentacles and whatever parts of the caster's face are left “exposed.” The extent of facial coverage is also as the caster desires.

This spell can conceal the casters identity or make onlookers think the caster is under attack or is some sort of disguised monster. The tentacles have no substance, being purely illusory; the casters vision, speech, and facial expressions remain unaltered. The caster can instantly end the spell (banishing the tentacles “early”) by silent act of will.

The material component of a *tentacled visage* spell is a piece of squid, octopus, illithid, or other natural tentacle as long as the caster's hand. It can be mummified, pickled, or “raw.”



Ed Greenwood is impatient to try his newest recipe for dragon soup—but warns us that the one he got from Volo for baked stirge on toast was a bad mistake. No, make that very bad.

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The Dragon's Bestiary

chaos Creatures

by Gregory W. Detwiler

illustrated by George Vrbanic

THE CHAOS WAR came at the very end of what might be called the "AD&D® Age" of Krynn. When the Summer of Chaos was over, the world of the DRAGONLANCE® setting had entered a new era, complete with new rules governing magic. But what of the Summer of Chaos itself? How does the DM handle the changes? For those who continue to use the AD&D game rules for their DRAGONLANCE campaigns—or for those who wish to play the events of the Chaos War with the AD&D rules before changing to the SAGA® system—this article "reverse engineers" the creatures of Chaos listed in the DRAGONLANCE: FIFTH AGE™ book, translating them into AD&D terms for those parties who want to defend Krynn during the Summer of Chaos.

All of these monsters came from the Abyss when Chaos was released from the Graystone of Gargath. The monsters were spontaneously formed from the swirling darkness of Chaos himself, coming to the surface of Krynn through a fiery rift made in the Turbidus Ocean. The fire dragons, however, might have been a last-minute creation, as reports of the initial invasion describe one of these beasts being formed every time a tongue of flame licked the edges of the rift.

Note: Fire dragons not borne of the fiery rift are hatched from eggs of flaming magma, but these "eggs" (described below) are merely Chaos' way of sustaining the monsters without requiring its undivided attention.

In the final battle in the Abyss, Chaos created daemon warriors, fire dragons, and chaos wights from the bodies of those already slain by the Knights of Solamnia and Takhisis and their dragon mounts. Once Chaos departs from Krynn, no more of these chaos creatures can be created.

These four monsters can be formidable opponents in an AD&D campaign. If they seem unwieldy because they are restricted to Krynn, remember that this need not be so in your world. After all, every world came originally from Chaos (or nothing at all, if you prefer). Perhaps your own campaign world is due for a Summer of Chaos!

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	See below
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (18)
TREASURE:	B
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	2-20
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	12, Fl 18 (A)
HIT DICE:	5
THAC0:	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	By weapon type
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Fear aura
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to fire, nonblessed weapons
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%
SIZE:	M (4'-7')
MORALE:	Fanatic (17)
XP VALUE:	5,000

Daemon warriors are special undead beings created by Chaos to terrorize and slay his enemies. They form a major component of the armies raised to destroy all Krynn. These creatures have no true physical form, instead appearing differently to all who see them, as the most frightening thing their victims can imagine (see below).

Combat: As "common" soldiers in the army of Chaos, daemon warriors employ the same manner of weaponry as do human, humanoid, and demi-human races, though such weapons appear in eerie and bizarre forms. They have a "natural" Armor Class of 0; although they appear to be clad in armor of various designs, this is merely more crafted illusion to aid in the generation of fear.

Daemon warriors generate a fear aura that extends 10 feet in all directions, affecting all creatures with less than 20 Intelligence. (Note that the exact shape does not matter in combat, but the daemon warrior typically appears as something of medium size.) Any living creature approached by a daemon warrior must make a successful save vs. spell with a -2 penalty or flee in panic for 3d10 rounds. Since the daemon warrior always appears as everyone's worst nightmare come true, having more Hit Dice than the daemon warrior does not grant immunity to the fear aura.

Daemon warriors are immune to non-blessed and non-magical weapons. Weapons that have been *blessed*, whether via the clerical spell or directly by a deity, destroy the daemon warrior on contact, while holy and magical weapons inflict normal damage. This immunity also applies to attacks with bodily weapons such as fists, horns, etc., unless the attacker has 7 HD or more.

When reduced to zero hit points, the daemon warrior explodes in flames, inflicting 1d6 hp damage to all within 5 feet. In addition, the explosion automatically destroys the weapon striking it, though magical weapons are entitled to a save vs. crushing blow with a +1 bonus per "plus." A clerical holy symbol of any religion thrust into the creature destroys both it and the symbol if the priest makes a successful attack roll.



Daemon warriors are immune to fire, even magical flames such as a *fireball* spell or red dragon breath. They have 10% magic resistance as well. As undead, they are unaffected by *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, or cold-based spells and are also immune to poison and paralyzation. Holy water splashed on them inflicts 2-8 hp damage per vial, while a *raise dead* spell destroys them instantly if they fail to save vs death magic. Although they dislike sunlight, often lurking with shadow-wights for this reason, they are not actually harmed by it.

Habitat/Society: Daemon warriors are undead beings who are specially organized for warfare, roaming singly or in small bands across the countryside, attacking everything in sight. During these forays, they often ride fire dragons. While large armies are possible, as in the assault on the High Clerist's Tower, these creatures are chaotic beings who hate any kind of order, as does their creator.

Any daemon warriors encountered are probably guarding some sensitive place Chaos wants protected or (more likely) are assaulting a place the PCs are protecting or simply going on a murderous rampage through the countryside. They do not negotiate, attacking on sight and fighting to the death. This behavior makes them particularly dangerous opponents if they outnumber the enemy, for if they cannot panic their opponents, they bore steadily in, ignoring all losses until the enemy runs out of weapons.

Ecology: Undead beings generally have no effect on the local ecology, other than to ensure that there isn't any in their immediate vicinity. Daemon warriors expand this concept, as their reason for existing is to wipe out all life on Krynn, taking the offensive against the living rather than merely lurking in some tomb awaiting all comers. They require no food, being sustained solely by the powers of Chaos. It is theoretically possible that their essence, or the residue remaining after one of them explodes, can be used in the creation of magical items such as a *wand of fear*, *wand of polymorphing*, *ring of fire resistance*, or scroll ink for spells that have similar effect.

Dragon, Fire

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very Rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (6)
TREASURE:	Special (see below)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil

NO. APPEARING:	1-8
ARMOR CLASS:	-3 (base)
MOVEMENT:	9, Fl 30 (C)
HIT DICE:	11 (base)
THAC0:	9 (at 11 HD)
NO. OF ATTACKS:	3 + special
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-12/1-12/6-36
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Special
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to fire and non-blessed weapons; see below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Variable
SIZE:	G (55' base)
MORALE:	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	Variable

Fire dragons are creatures of Chaos created in mockery of true dragons. This imitation extends so far as to cause these creatures to appear at all levels of development, from eggs to great wyrms. Fire dragons appear to be made of living magma, with obsidian scales and eyes like glowing embers.

Combat: These creatures have a claw/claw/bite routine. In addition, they can use all special physical attacks that dragons have, such as wing buffets, tail slaps, and so forth. They also have the fear aura of true dragons, at the same power as their apparent age level.

Breath weapon/special abilities: The breath weapon of a fire dragon is a cloud of sulfurous vapor that chokes and burns anything in its path, causing half damage if the target saves vs breath weapon. The touch of a fire dragon inflicts 1-8 hp burning damage to anything that does not save vs. spells. When in flight, fire dragons shed a steady rain of red-hot embers that ignite all flammable material they touch (save vs. magical fire).

Fire dragons are immune to all fire-based attacks. On the other hand, cold- and water-based attacks inflict double damage. Holy water splashed on them inflicts 1-12 hp damage per vial.



Fire dragons are impervious to non-magical, non-blessed weapons, but magical, holy, or recently blessed weapons inflict normal damage. Acid attacks harm the fire dragon normally. Attack spells that are not fire-based also cause normal damage, although fire dragons have a base 10% magic resistance at birth, and this increases an additional 5% per increase in apparent age level.

Habitat/Society: Fire dragons are loners, gathering only when commanded to by Chaos, as during the Chaos War. They seem to form family groups at times but do not hoard treasure. They often serve as mounts for daemon warriors, and this is as far as they ever go toward cooperating with others.

Ecology: Like true dragons, fire dragons eat practically anything, including earth and stone. However, they much prefer flesh. Their bodies can provide magical ingredients for scroll ink for spells like *fireball* and *protection from fire*, while the hide can make fire-resistant scale mail, and the bones are useful for tipping *wands of fire*. Still, if wizards stumble upon some fire dragons before the Summer of Chaos, they would be well-advised to use these unexpected "resources" to make as many *arrows of fire dragon slaying* as possible.

Age	Body Lgt.(')	Tail Lgt.(')	AC	Breath Weapon	MR	XP
1	2-16	3-18	0	2d12+2	10%	4,000
2	16-31	18-35	-1	4d12+4	15%	6,000
3	31-61	35-69	-2	6d12+6	20%	8,000
4	61-80	69-88	-3	8d12+8	25%	10,000
5	80-99	88-107	-4	10d12+10	30%	12,000
6	99-118	107-126	-5	12d12+12	35%	14,000
7	118-137	126-145	-6	14d12+14	40%	16,000
8	137-156	145-164	-7	16d12+16	45%	18,000
9	156-175	164-183	-8	18d12+18	50%	20,000
10	175-184	183-202	-9	20d12+20	55%	25,000
11	184-193	202-211	-10	22d12+22	60%	30,000
12	193-202	211-220	-11	24d12+24	65%	35,000

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110

When the original author can be traced, the work is usually referred to as a *reprint*.

	Frost Wight	Shadow Wight
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any arctic	Any
FREQUENCY:	Very rare	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack or "cloud" (see below)	Pack or "cloud" (see below)
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any	Any
DIET:	Nil (see below)	Nil (see below)
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (10)	Average (10)
TREASURE:	H	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil	Chaotic Evil
NO. APPEARING:	2-8	2-8
ARMOR CLASS:	4	4
MOVEMENT:	12, Fly 18 (B)	12 Fly 24 (B)
HIT DICE:	6	6
THAC0:	15	15
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1-6	Nil
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nullify (see below)	Nullify (see below)
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Hit only by blessed or +1 or better weapon	Hit only by blessed or +1 or better weapon
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	10%	10%
SIZE:	M (6' tall)	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (18)	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	4,000	4,000

Chaos wights are the remnants of fallen Knights of Takhisis and Solamnia, as well as other unfortunate wretches, raised from death by Chaos. They wander Krynn in packs, seeking to eradicate life in all forms.

Frost Wight

A frost wight appears to be a swirling white cloud, like a miniature blizzard roughly the size of a human. Those who face frost wights in battle, however, behold far more (see below). These undead appear only in the arctic regions, for which those residents of Krynn who live elsewhere are profoundly grateful.

Combat: A frost wight inflicts 1-6 hp damage with its freezing touch, even to creatures normally immune to cold. When a frost wight moves close enough to engage in melee combat, it assumes the physical appearance of its victim, at the same time speaking hypnotic words of despair. This magical verbal attack gradually persuades the victim that he or she is worthless. To resist this nullification attack, the victim must make a successful saving throw vs. death magic at a -2 penalty. If the roll fails, the touch of the frost wight sweeps the victim out of existence so that not only is the victim destroyed but his or her existence is wiped from the memories of all who once knew him. No one, not even relatives or close friends, remembers the victim; only written records—like the *Chronicles of Astinus*—enable anyone to know that the victim ever existed. Because of the nature of the nullification attack, victims cannot be brought back by any means, not even a wish.

Frost wights are immune to cold-based attacks. As undead, they are also immune to sleep, charm, paralyzation, hold, and death spells, as well as to poison. Ordinary weapons cause no harm to frost wights unless the weapons have been blessed. Magical weapons inflict full damage. Any metal weapon that slays a frost wight becomes so brittle from the cold that the next blow struck shatters it,

though magical weapons gain a save vs. crushing blow with a +2 bonus per "plus." (Thus, a long sword +3 has a +6 bonus to its save.) The same is true for any holy symbol that touches the frost wight when the holder makes a successful attack roll; the symbol dispels the undead creature, but then it disappears forever along with the frost wight.

Sunlight annoys frost wights but causes no real damage. Fire inflicts double damage on them, and the mere presence of fire, even as little as a candle, next to a character means the frost wight is unable to take his form and attempt a nullification attack. Holy water splashed on a frost wight causes 1-6 hp damage per vial, as does the blow of a torch. A *raise dead* spell instantly destroys the creature.

Shadow Wight

Shadow wights appear as shadows or black clouds, also roughly the size of a human. They are actually "living" holes in the fabric of reality; those who gaze upon them do not look *at* them but *through* them.

Combat: Like frost wights, shadow wights can assume the forms of their intended victims, gazing into their eyes and speaking hypnotic words of despair. Their intended targets must make a saving throw vs. death magic (with a -2 penalty) or else the next time a shadow wight touches them, they vanish from existence and memory via the *nullification* power. This power works exactly the same way as it does when used by the frost wights.

Ordinary sunlight annoys shadow wights to the point that they avoid it whenever possible, but it does not actually harm them. However, light-based magic spells such as *light*, *continual light*, *dancing lights*, *audible glamer*, and *faerie fire* so disrupt their powers that the shadow wights are rendered unable to take the shape of their victims and use the nullification power. Fire and electrical attacks inflict full damage on shadow wights. These creatures are immune to all non-magical weapons that have not been *blessed*; an

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Wight, Chaos



otherwise mundane weapon that receives the blessing of some deity, however, causes normal damage, as do magical and holy weapons. A shadow wight is instantly dispelled if a priest makes a successful attack roll with a hand holding a holy symbol of some sort. Being undead, these creatures are immune to cold-based attacks and poison, as well as *death*, *hold*, *sleep*, *charm*, and *paralyzation* spells. Holy water splashed on them inflicts 1-6 hp damage per vial.

Habitat/Society: Both frost wights and shadow wights haunt the cold and lonely places of the world, making them lonelier still by eliminating all living beings with their nullifying power. They tend to congregate in larger groups than other creatures of Chaos, roaming the countryside in packs or "clouds," nullifying every living thing in their path.

Ecology: More than most other undead—or even other minions of Chaos—frost wights seek to eliminate all living beings they catch. Many powerful PCs, particularly mages and priests, might find the concept of totally destroying their enemies, even the memory of their enemies, highly attractive, but no known mage or priest has succeeded in using the essence of these creatures to create a magical

item or spell that duplicates this effect. It is not even known whether anyone has tried; a disaster during the process of experimentation may well have wiped out the memory of any number of fools attempting such a feat. A slightly safer job would be using their trapped essence to create cold-related magic items, such as a *wand of frost*.

Like the frost wights, shadow wights exist—if that is the right word—to wipe out all living beings, body, soul, and memory. Their essence would doubtless be useful in making darkness-based magic items, or scroll ink for spells such as *darkness, 15' radius*, but no one had ever returned from gathering such components. For that matter, no one can remember anyone even setting out for such a purpose.

Cryonisis and Frisindia, two white dragon sisters who dwell on the frigid Icewall Glacier, are constantly trying to broach a dwarven catacombs deep beneath the glacier. Therein lies a trove of ancient dwarven battle axes, all of them enchanted with powerful blessings. If the dragons successfully arm their thanoi minions with these weapons, the growing numbers of chaos wights prowling the Frigid Wastes south of Tarsis—not to mention tribes of peaceful Ice Folk—could be neatly eradicated.

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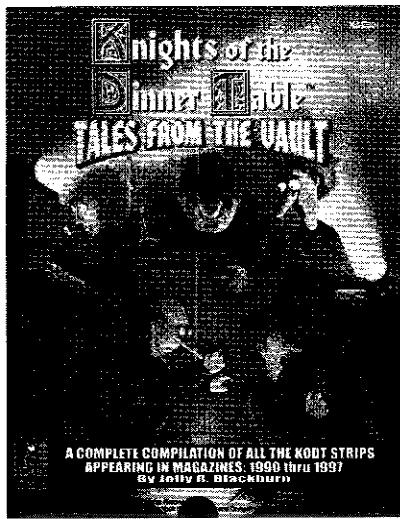
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Dudley College of Technology, Dudley, West Midlands, UK. From 10:00 A.M. to 11:00 P.M. Tournaments include AD&D West Midlands Open, *Magic: the Gathering**, *Call of Cthulhu**, *Chivalry & Sorcery**, *Traveller**, plus many others. This is a premier independent competitive games convention in the heart of the UK, is sponsored by the Black Country Role Playing Society. Contact: Steve Turner at 94 Laurel Road, Dudley, West Midlands, UK. Email: DudleyBug@aol.com.

OurCon VI Candles in Darkness April 24-26

MA

UMass Campus Center, Amherst, MA. Events: Roleplaying, LARP, miniatures games, card games, board games, dealers' room, videos, round-table discussions, and the Infamous Iron Rations Con Suite. Contact: OurCon VI Candles in Darkness, RSO 178-416 SUB, University of Mass., MA 01003. Website: <http://www.umass.edu/rsos/gameclub/ourcon/>.

Nova 23

April 25

MI

Oakland University in the Oakland Center, Rochester, MI. Events: tournaments, demonstrations by Games

Workshop, door prizes, miniature contest, RPGA Network tournaments, White Wolf LARPS, anime Room, computer gaming, costume contest, DCI-sanctioned card games. Registration: \$10.00 at the door; GMs can run at least two slots for a full refund.

Contact: Order of Leibowitz, 64 Oakland Center, Oakland University, Rochester MI 48309. Email: amtoby@oakland.edu. Website: <http://www.oakland.edu/oofl/>.

Havoc XIV

April 25-26

MA

Fort Devens Gymnasium, Ayer, Mass. BGBoston, Inc.'s 14th annual wargaming convention. Contact: Peter Mancini, 200 Bedford Road, Apt. 17A, Woburn, MA 01801. Dealer information: Mark Brown, 29 Thornton Road, Waltham, MA 02154.

Convention Listings Policies

This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed:

In order to ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be either typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct.

The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order:

1. Convention title and dates held
2. Site and location
3. Guests of honor (if applicable)
4. Special events offered
5. Registration fees or attendance requirements, and
6. Address where additional information and confirmation can be obtained

Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. Unless stated otherwise, all dollar values given for U.S. and Canadian conventions are in U.S. currency.

Warning: We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility.

Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," DRAGON® Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A.

If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the

dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 254-2262 (U.S.A.).

Important: DRAGON Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct.

To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

❖ Australian convention

✳ Canadian convention

✳ European convention

MAY CONVENTIONS

East Coast Game Faire

May 8-10

NJ
Sheraton Meadowlands Hotel, East Rutherford, NJ. Guests: Andrew Greenberg and Bill Bridges of Holistic Design, and Peter Adkison of Wizards of the Coast, who will run his own AD&D game.

Events: *Babylon 5*

LARP, *Dark Ages*

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Ben Con '98

May 21-24

CO

Denver Doubletree Hotel, Denver, CO. Events: RPGA Network tournaments, including decathlon and LIVING CITY (Ravens Bluff and Procampur), LIVING JUNGLE™, LIVING DEATH, Threads of Legend, and Virtual Seattle. Other events: LARPs, Puffin' Billy, TCGs, war, miniature and board games, artists, authors, game designers, charity auctions, seminars, dealers room. All proceeds go to local charities. Registration: \$20, event fees \$1-3, demos free. Contact: Ken Ritchart, P.O. Box 19232, Boulder, CO 80308-2232. Email: Dragon0525@aol.com. Website: <http://www.bengames.org/-whitet/bencon/>.

AgamemCon

May 22-24

CA

Burbank Airport Hilton and Convention Center, Burbank, CA. Guests: David Eagle, Stephen Furst, Joshua Cox, Jeffery Willerth, Mark Altman, Stephen C. Smith, Richard Herd. Events: dealers room, parties, art show, masquerade, video room, panels, and more. Contact: Agamemcon, 24161-H Hollyoak, Laguna Hills, CA 92656. Email: Emailorrock@ix.netcom.com.

Three Rivers Game Fest

May 22-25

PA
Green Tree Marriot Hotel, Pittsburgh, PA. Contact: Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 13500, Columbus, OH 43213. Email: Andon@aol.com Web site: <http://wwwandonunlimited.com>

Games on the Horizon II

May 29-31

IN

Days Inn, Portage, IN. Guests: Ken Whitman, Lester Smith, Tony Lee, and Don Perrin. Events: roleplaying, TCGs, LARP, miniature games, board games, guest demos. Other activities: RPGA (LIVING CITY, LIVING DEATH, and others), NASA car,

Battletech and Magic tournaments, charity auction, guest signings. Registration: \$15 until May 1, \$20 at door. Contact: Games II, P.O. Box 1602, Portage, IN 46368. Email: conman1@gte.net. Website: <http://www.geocities.com/TimesSquare/Dungeon/6825>.

JUNE CONVENTIONS

Milwaukee Summer Revel

June 5-7

WI

The Inn Towne Hotel, 710 Old World Third Street, Milwaukee. Guests: Gary Gygax, Janet Pack, Tom Wham. Events: All first-run roleplaying events, including LIVING CITY and LIVING JUNGLE™ tournaments, AD&D game, Call of Cthulhu, Boot Hill™, *Paranoia**, board games, miniature events, war games, nonstop Dawn Patrol, TCGs, and the always exciting Wham-A-Than. Other events: Seminars, dealers area, game demonstrations, and strategic breaks for lunch and dinner. Registration: \$20. Contact: Bruce Rabe, Summer Revel, P.O. Box 779, New Munster, WI 53102.

Manafest '98

June 12-14

CA

South San Francisco Conference Center, South San Francisco, CA. Manafest '98 offers three days of family gaming covering collectible card games, classic and modern board games, and miniatures. Activities include tournaments, special events, demonstrations, prizes, a game flea market and an exhibit hall for game manufacturers. Contact: Manafest P.O.

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Box 170436, San Francisco, CA 94117

Email: info@magicscroll.com. Website: www.manafest.com.

JULY CONVENTIONS

Origins '98

July 2-5

OH

Columbus Convention Center and the Hyatt, Columbus, OH. Contact: Andon Unlimited, P.O. Box 13500, Columbus, OH 43213. Email: Andon@aol.com. Website: <http://wwwandonunlimited.com>.



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DragonMirth

By Aaron Williams

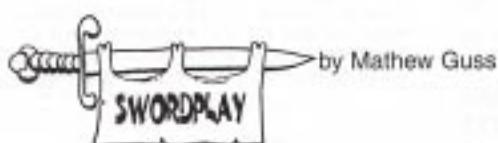


"WHOA! HAVING A BAD PLUME DAY, RALPH?"

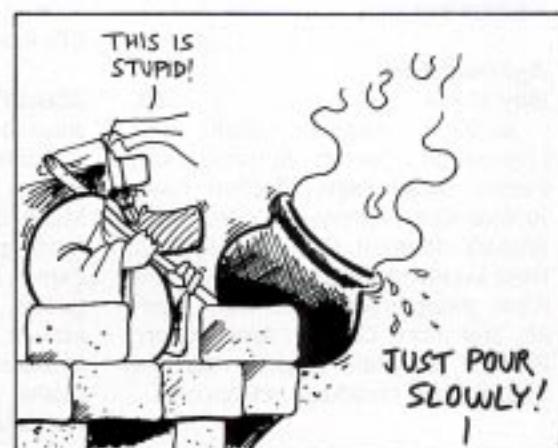
By David Hanson



"THE LAST DRAGON YOU SLEW ... IT WASN'T ONE OF THOSE FAIR MAIDEN-HOSTAGE SITUATIONS, WAS IT?"

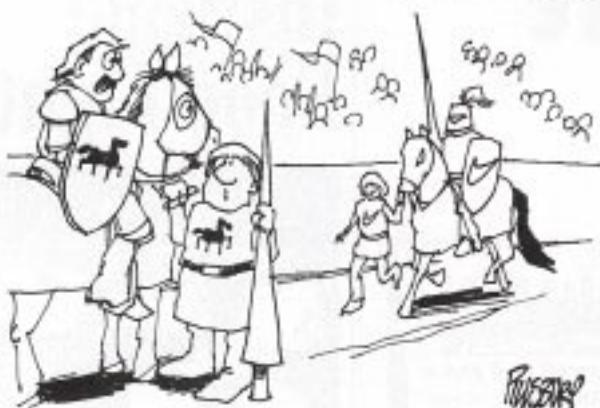


by Mathew Guss



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By Joseph Pillsbury



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By Aaron Williams



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Cafeteria Workers Instigate Food Fight



"They were armed to the teeth," one surprised customer said. "You should have seen it. Carrots, tomatoes, broccoli everywhere." It seems cafeteria workers all over town have joined **The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer**. Now they're recommending foods that may help reduce cancer risk. The list includes foods high in vitamins A and C, high in fiber and low in fat.

"I love to see people eat healthy," as one server put it. "When I throw a big helping of steamed vegetables on someone's plate, I feel real good inside."

Similar sentiments were echoed by other workers. "When a kid reaches for low-fat milk or yogurt, or grabs an apple for dessert, well, it's just beautiful," said one emotional server.

Experts recommend that people join **The Great American Food Fight Against Cancer** whether dining out or at home.

The American Cancer Society, sponsor of the Food Fight, has more information. Call **1-800-ACS-2345**.

And, be on the lookout for Community Crusade volunteers armed with shopping lists. Ready? Aim. Chew!



Design a new alien race for the ALTERNITY® game

Have you ever wanted to take an alien apart and see what all the gooey bits inside look like? To win the "Alien Autopsy Contest," just send us the results of your autopsy of an original alien species, or the field tests, or the psych profiles, or all three. Whatever the format of your investigation, follow the ALTERNITY game rules in your entry. We'll put your alien on the slab for dissection with the others we receive, and our panel of game designers will choose a winner and three runners up.

First prize is a signed copy of every release in the STAR*DRIVE™ line for the year: the *STAR*DRIVE Campaign Book*, the *STAR*DRIVE Alien Compendium™* accessory, the *Arms & Equipment Guide*, *The Last Warhulk* adventure, the *Lighthouse* sourcebook, and the *Threats From Beyond* adventure anthology. Three runners up will each receive a signed copy of the *STAR*DRIVE Alien Compendium*. All entries must be received by **June 15, 1998**. All judges' decisions are final.

Please limit entries to 1,000 words or less.



"Alien Autopsy: Design an Alien" Contest Rules

1. Entry: To enter, send your completed entry form including your name, address, phone number, the spell to which your submission applies, and your proposed spell ("Entry") to TSR, Inc. ("TSR") Dragon Magazine Alien Autopsy Contest, P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707. No purchase required. You may submit as many entries as you wish, but only one entry per submission. There is no advantage to submitting the same entry more than once. Artifact entries may not exceed 1,000 words in length. If you are under 18, you must have your parent's permission to enter. Entries must be received before midnight (Pacific Time), **June 15, 1998**. Winners will be selected by a team of TSR judges based on the entry's consistency with the feel of the *Alien®* Science Fiction Roleplaying Game setting, originality, appropriateness to the game, and applicability to the game system. All decisions are final. The probability of winning is based exclusively on the quality of the entries received.

2. Originality of Entry: All entries must be in English. Entrant warrants that the entry written above is the original and exclusive work of Entrant, and that Entrant has not assigned, transferred, licensed, or sold the right to use the entry to any other party. Entrant agrees to indemnify TSR against good faith claims of copyright infringement based on TSR's use of the entry, but such indemnification shall not apply if it can be shown that Entrant had no access to the allegedly infringed work.

3. Use and Ownership of Entry Info: In consideration for TSR's review of Entrant's application and, if applicable, prizes awarded hereunder, Entrant transfers all rights, including all copyright ownership rights in entry to TSR and acknowledges that the entry is hereby the sole property of TSR. It is further understood that Entrant hereby transfers any and all interest or rights that she/he acquires in entry, including but not limited to trademark rights and copyrights and protection under 17 U.S.C. § 106 to TSR. TSR shall have no obligation for consideration other than as defined herein.

4. Prizes: The designer of the Best Alien™ Alien shall receive a signed copy of every release in the complete *Star*Drive* line for 1998: the *Star*Drive Campaign Book* (approximate value \$29.95), the *Star*Drive Alien Compendium* (approximate value \$21.95), the *Arms & Equipment Guide* (approximate value \$16.95), *The Last Warhulk* adventure (approximate value \$13.95), the *Lighthouse* sourcebook (approximate value \$13.95), and the *Threats From Beyond* adventure anthology (approximate value \$16.95). Three runners-up will receive signed copies of the *Star*Drive Alien Compendium* (approximate value \$21.95).

"Alien Autopsy: Design an Alien" Contest

Name: _____

Address: _____

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Phone: _____

5. Eligibility: Void where prohibited by law. In order to receive any prize, Entrant agrees to sign TSR's affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance ("Affidavit"). Within 5 days of receipt of notification or receipt of prize, if the winner is a minor, then the guardian must co-sign the Affidavit. By acceptance of prize, Entrant agrees to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. TSR assumes no responsibility for late, ineligible, incomplete, or misdirected entries. Non-compliance with the time parameters contained herein or return of any prize/prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected. Employees of TSR, Wizards of the Coast, Inc., and their respective affiliates and distributors are not eligible.

6. Restrictions: Void where prohibited or restricted by law. All prize winners shall be notified by phone or letter. No substitutions of prizes are allowed, except at the option of TSR, should the featured prize(s) become unavailable. All federal, state, provincial, and local regulations apply. The winner is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state, provincial, and local taxes. For a list of winners, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Dragon Magazine Alien Autopsy: Design an Alien Contest Winners, TSR, Inc., P.O. Box 707, Renton, WA 98057. Requests for winners lists must be received by **July 15, 1998**. Allow 4 weeks for delivery of winners list.

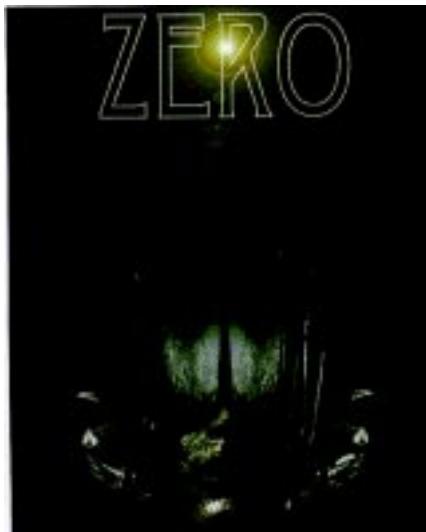


Odd Roles in Offbeat Settings

© 1997 Allen Varney

AH, THOSE HAPPY DAYS of childhood. Okay, we caught measles and mumps and chicken pox, and officious teachers broke our love of learning on the wheel of authority. Bullies tormented the boys, and hideous rites of ostracism and humiliation befell the girls. Yet when we got together to play "let's pretend," our imaginations ran free. Remember? "Okay, this front yard is the planar fortress inside a giant plant stalk. I'll be the clairvoyant telekinetic archivist biomech, and you can be the Buddhist kung-fu werewolf."

What, that wasn't your version of "let's pretend"? That's because you didn't have these roleplaying games and supplements, which move beyond almost every recognizable character type to offer truly unusual roles and even stranger settings.



Zero* game

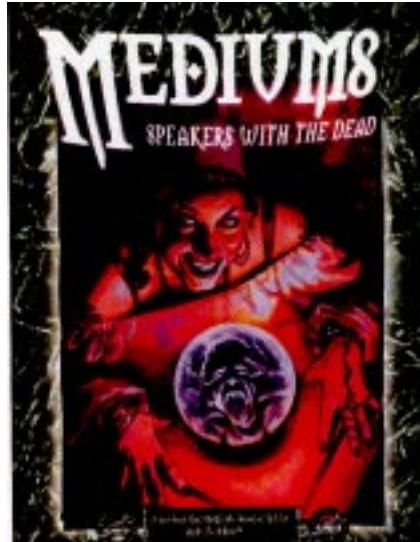
80-page softcover book
Archangel Entertainment \$25
Artwork and Vision: Steve Stone
Design: Lester Smith
Editing: Don Perrin
Ordering information: Archangel, Box 481, Lake Geneva, WI 53147

Mediums: Speakers With the Dead

*Wraith: The Oblivion** supplement
120-page softcover book
White Wolf Game Studio \$15
Design: Justin Achilli, Andrew Bates, Lisa Daigle, John Daigle, Roger Gaudreau, Ed Hall, Robert Martin, James A. Moore, Ronni Radner, Tracy Rysavy, Fred Yelk
Additional material and Development: Richard E. Dansky
Editing: Ed Hall, Allison Sturms
Illustrations: Dennis Calero, Richard Clark, Mike Danza, Fred Hooper, Eric Lacombe, David Leri, Larry McDougall, Pia Guerra
Cover: Greg Loudon

Stargazers Tribebook

*Werewolf: The Apocalypse** supplement
72-page softcover book
White Wolf \$10
Design: Bill Bridges
Development: Ethan Skemp
Editing: Aileen E. Miles
Illustrations: Steve Carter and Antoinette Rydry, Alex Sheikman, James Stowe, Drew Tucker
Cover: Joshua Gabriel Timbrook



Here's the oddest role I've seen in some time. In Lester Smith's **Zero** game, you play what amounts to a human cancer cell.

Telepathically linked to hundreds of thousands of other Borg-style biomech citizens in Queen Zero's colossal underground Hive, you knew the utter contentment of assimilation. Then you woke up. You don't know why—not even the gamemaster knows why—but now the hive likes you about as much as a basal carcinoma. Fleeing with other player characters (PCs) into the dark outer tunnels, you explore, fight cybergoblins and giant albino crabs, and "begin to rediscover what it is to be individuals, and arguably what it means to be human" (page 48).

Inspired by the Gigeresque photo mosaics of English computer artist Steve Stone, **Zero** casts you as a biomechanical archivist (data keeper), breeder (medic and empath), soldier, technician, or unspecialized drone. Your caste has psionic powers like telekinesis, teleportation, teleesthesia and "telergy" (emotion control); skills (electronics, hydroponics); and grafted on gear (pulse cannon, booster drugs, "gargoyle" flight suit, psi lens). You have a five-digit "name" rolled on six-sided dice. But you don't have a personality, until you start inventing it.

Given designer Smith's previous efforts (GDW's *Dark Conspiracy** and the unjustly neglected *Bughunter* game for TSR's AMAZING ENGINE® system), it startled me that **Zero** elegantly defines your character with exactly one number, called the focus. Your focus is the number of abilities yo-

know best (maximum 10). In an ability test, roll two dice and multiply them, trying to match or beat your focus number. You have 1d6-3 "prior abilities"; to use them, you want to roll *less than or equal* to the focus. To use "unfamiliar" abilities, you roll *less than* the focus. The mechanic sounds simple, but beware if your group includes a player like one of mine, who absolutely Did. Not. Get. It. For an entire scenario. After long frustration, we all wished we belonged to a hive-mind.

Zero players roleplay their "discovery" of individuality, speech, emotion, reproduction, and so on. That's already odd, but to compound this quirkiness, the game never portrays these human qualities as more attractive than Zero's hive-mind. As written, individuality seems a curse. Unlike a cancer, you can't overthrow your host; Zero is unkillable, a sort of demurge. Supposedly you can discover the danger that drove Zero underground millennia ago, but the game doesn't reveal it.

Pitting its hunted characters against featureless nemeses amid insoluble mysteries with no evident goal, **Zero** evokes a surreal, existential mood, similar to West End's *Paranoia* but—like Smith's previous games—without humor. At \$25 for 80 pages (14 of those color plates of Stone's work), you pay almost as steep a price for uniqueness as do its hive's hapless fugitives.

Rick Swan briefly reviewed **Zero** in *DRAGON Magazine*'s February issue, which arrived just as I was preparing my own review. I could have found this out if only I had psychic powers (or, okay, if I'd called the editor). This makes me envy the psychically gifted mortals in **Mediums: Speakers With the Dead**. But then I see the book's subtitle, "A Sourcebook About Mortals Who Know Too Much for Wraith: The Oblivion" (a line that reads differently depending on where you break it). I meet its tortured boardwalk fortunetellers, charlatans freaked out by annoyed wraiths, clueless researchers of the paranormal, Benandante ghostbusters, and Giovanni vampires. And I grow glad not to have psychic powers after all.

Usually the plural of "medium" is "media"—and hey, White Wolf editors, "media" is plural, as in, "Modern news media are appalling." But the speakers-to-spooks here are mediums, living *Wraith* PCs and Storyteller characters with Merits like Dead Connection and

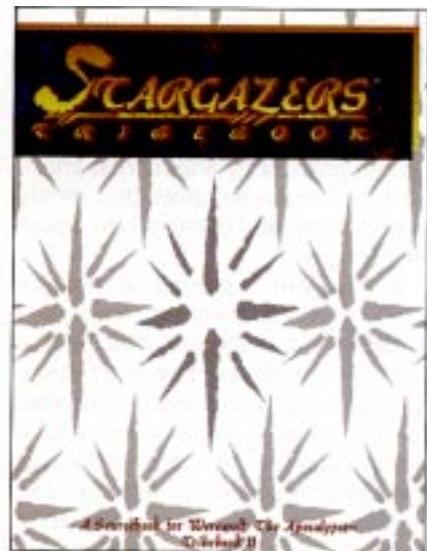
Flaws like Spectre Meat or (suitable for almost all White Wolf characters) Extremely Depressing. These gifted folks have complex motives—curiosity, control, fame, altruism—and use everything from Tarot decks to Stochastical Extrusion Engines to vampiric necromancy. The supplement also describes imaginative wraith responses to these intruders: Spectre cults and "thrasher" groups who like to strike a happy medium.

This much of *Wraith's* "Year of the Ally" theme supplement is cool, though maybe "warm" works better here. But **Mediums** turns into a grab bag of everything the 12 authors could think of about any living person: televangelists who care nothing about ghosts, Native American shamans, unneeded *Quick and the Dead* character updates, Tarot reading, and-oh, great-a player character template for a serial killer. Focus, focus!

Before **Mediums**, I never much liked *Wraith*. ("Okay, I'm dead, *still* in deep trouble, too weak to lift a pencil, and another player wants to destroy me?") Writer Sam Dodsworth made me understand why with his eye-opening 1995 review of *Wraith's* first edition, published in the late British journal *Interactive Fantasy* (issue #3). Dodsworth observed that all White Wolf RPGs are metaphors for adolescence. They feature "protagonists who have been ripped unwillingly from their former cozy existence, gifted with powers and new, barely controlled drives, and thrust into a world hopelessly corrupted by easily recognized evil and controlled by unimaginably old and powerful elites who act to suppress any innovation. This is about as unequivocally adolescent as you can get, particularly when you take into account the self-important editorial comments."

Dodsworth recognizes that there's nothing wrong with this. White Wolf's popularity demonstrates that the adolescent world-view strikes a deep chord in the audience. But if you seek a more grownup Storyteller approach, you'll usually find it only in *Mage: The Ascension*—and sometimes, as here, in *Wraith*. Rick Swan didn't like **Mediums** because it's "incidental to the essence of *Wraith*." For me, the more incidental, the better. With **Mediums**, I can finally play someone who isn't destructively self-obsessed.

Werewolf The Apocalypse offers a similar offbeat archetype, the Stargazers.



Mixing philosophy with fang gnashing, the **Stargazers Tribebook** lets you shepherd all souls toward enlightenment, except the ones you disembowel on the way.

As a Stargazer, you're sort of a samurai werewolf, inwardly calm but still guarding Gaia in the war against the corrupting Wyrm. Yet as author (and former *Werewolf* guru) Bill Bridges tells us, Stargazers believe the Wyrm does its nasty deeds not through evil, but because it suffers. "Its extreme pain causes the world more pain. [The cause] is the same cause as all suffering: Mind. This is the true enemy . . . the begetter of duality and discrimination, the womb of illusion" (pages 15-16).

Pretty odd talk for a werewolf. **Stargazers** adapts these Buddhist ideas for its bloody-clawed Garou far more intelligently than White Wolf's previous shot at Asian wisdom, the *Akashic Brotherhood* Tradition book for *Mage*. Where the Tradition book for those Eastern martial-artist mages offered nonsense ("The forces that make up the Cosmic All must find an equilateral existence, or the All will be thrown off into oblivion to right itself again"), **Stargazers** creatively adapts for *Werewolf*'s cosmology such central Buddhist ideas as cycles of suffering, the veil of illusion, and the need for compassion.

Bored yet? Probably most gamers wouldn't play Buddhist werewolves any more than they'd become real Buddhists. Instead, they'd want this Tribebook's new maneuvers for the Garou martial art, Kailindo (you'll need the *Werewolf Players Guide* to use them), or the Reborn Sage Merit, or the Gift that—eeeyikes! System abuse

alert!—lets a Stargazer cancel that scourge of mages, Paradox. But such rules-minded gamers would skip over a highly distinctive roleplaying opportunity. If you're at all interested in Eastern philosophy and martial arts, a Stargazer character gives you plenty to work with—and even to think about after the game.

Evaluation: Exploring a peculiar role, you can discover unprecedented delights—and challenges. You need a game or supplement that makes your path attractive and understandable. For experienced players inclined to venture into weird territory, two of these products give decent roadmaps.

Grievously overpriced and sketchy, *Zero* effectively puts you in an odd and original situation, but doesn't tell enough about what to do there. **Mediums**, though unfocused and overlong, brings a living human element to *Wraith* that I find attractive. If you never liked this game about dead people, you might now find it medium-tolerable. *Werewolf's* fascinating **Stargazers** Tribebook illuminates its journey toward enlightenment in blood-red floodlights. *Werewolf* players should look for it if they enjoy those Hong Kong movie monks who both meditate and kick major butt.

The Great Modron March

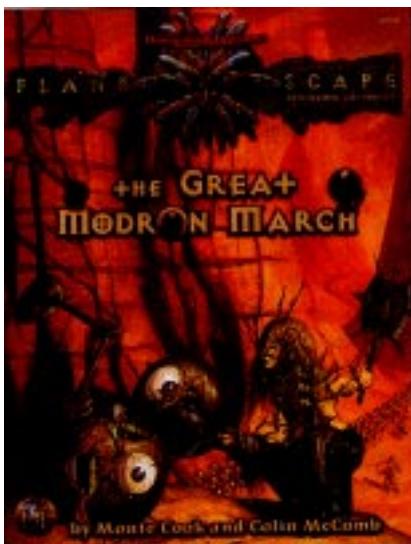
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Editing: Michele Carter
Illustrations: rk post, Adam Rex, Ray Nadeau
Cover: rk post

Faces of Evil: The Fiends

AD&D PLANESCAPE accessory
96-page softcover book
TSR, Inc. \$18.95
Design: Colin McComb
Editing: Ray Vallese
Illustrations: Adam Rex
Cover: Robh Ruppel

Dreams and Nightmares

Changeling: The Dreaming supplement
128-page softcover book
White Wolf \$16
Design: R. S. Martin, Neil Mick, Jim Moore
Development: Ian Lemke
Illustrations: Steve Ellis, Jeff Holt,



Ryan Kelly, Matthew Mitchell,
Paul Phillips, Steve Prescott
Cover: Michael Gaydos

In an odd setting, most any role can become odd. Play a hulking barbarian in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign, and you're one of thousands; play him in the futuristic cyber-magical Seattle of FASAs *Shadowrun*, and his routine barbarism becomes remarkable. But even when the PCs fit right in, spectacular scenery and outlandish cultures can still make adventures unforgettable.

For the purest spectacle and outlandishness in any AD&D campaign world, look to the Outer Planes of the PLANESCAPE setting. Out on the planes—the bizarre afterlife of Prime Material characters—everything grows bigger, from overpowering Mount Celestia to the world-spanning ash tree, Yggdrasil, to the Great Modron March.

Don't know the March? It's a real phenomenon: Over 10,000 modrons (little two-legged clockwork guys) parade forth from their highly lawful plane of Mechanus and walk the Great Ring through all the other planes. The Beastlands, Arborea, Ysgard—they march through implacably, relentlessly. The March invokes the grandeur of Earth's great buffalo migrations, or—when the modrons reach the evil Lower Planes—of the popular myth of mass lemming suicides. The journey takes months or years, and only a few modrons make it full-circle. Though they never seek protection, they need it.

The next Modron March wasn't due for 189 years, but for designers as talented as PLANESCAPE stars Monte

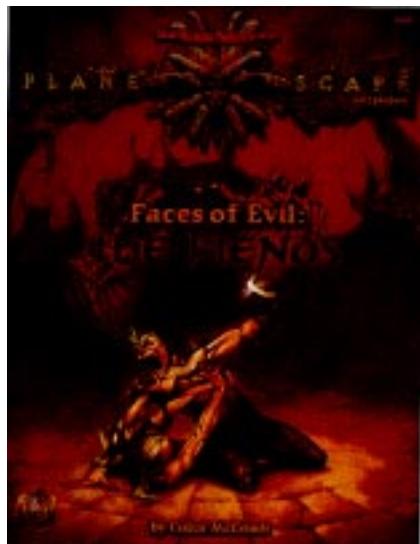
Cook and Colin McComb, reshuffling the schedule is the work of a moment. In the 128 mayhem-filled pages of **The Great Modron March**, PCs likely never learn exactly why the latest March starts early. But in 11 short scenarios they do learn how to evacuate villages ahead of the modron stampede, keep evil Tacharim knights from grotesquely cannibalizing clockwork parts, persuade cloud creatures not to divert the March, help the modrons through the formless chaos of Limbo, and so on. The campaign takes them from 1st to 9th or 10th level, with ample opportunity to explore every plane in the PLANESCAPE setting.

And what a setting! The tanar'ri Fortress of the Fallen Stair. The mad village of Bedlam. Acheron's Mine of Marsellin, a colossal floating cube made entirely of cast-off weapons and equipment. Even Undermountain—yes, Realms fans, *that* Undermountain. Compared to the rest, Undermountain comes off as downright plebeian.

Why should the PCs help the modrons? Hmm. Unfortunately, the heroes' motives here seem as inscrutable as the modrons. At first they get bodyguard jobs from various onlookers, but eventually they're supposed to help the March just because it's so cool. I can buy that, but make sure your PCs can too! And these 11 chapters hit just the high points of the March, so be ready to flesh out the framework with other adventures. (The *Well of Worlds* adventure anthology makes a good choice.)

Those gallivanting through the planes might pause a moment over **Faces of Evil**, which goes into remarkable detail about the most notorious denizens of the Lower Planes, the dem—uh, the dev—well, it still seems prudent to call them “fiends.” The detail in *Faces* is remarkable because there's (a) so much about fiendish reproduction, art and architecture, baatezu chains of command, tanar'ri communication (“they're constantly and fundamentally misunderstood,” so they resort to torture), yugoloth birth, the obsidian triangles of the gehreleths, and larvae physiology; and (b) so little of use in a game.

Yes, you might want to send your PCs to the yugoloths' Tower of Incarnate Pain, even though it absorbs fools who enter it and turns them into bricks; or to the baatezu's City of Man, an Inferno-in-reverse of



tempting pleasures where everything is free. But most of the useful information here just rehashes the first PLANESCAPE MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM book. Three lengthy discussions about summoning fiends boil down to "Don't." And were your PCs ever to meet one of the Dark Eight or an Abyssal Lord, they wouldn't live long enough to discover the secrets mentioned here.

Designer McComb seems to recognize the perfunctory nature of this project. To enliven dry material, he introduces a variety of fictitious narrators. Most entertaining is Xanxost, a slaad with an attitude but not much focus. Here's Xanxost discussing tanar'ri vulnerabilities: "Hello, mortals! It is time now to learn how to kill the tanar'ri. Xanxost knows of only three attacks that are fully effective: the *magic missile* spell and weapons forged of cold-wrought iron. Two attacks." He rambles on like this for pages, pausing to eat and to libel the baatezu. It's fun—not well-informed (*magic missile*, huh?)—but fun. Still, we needed more here than entertaining reading.

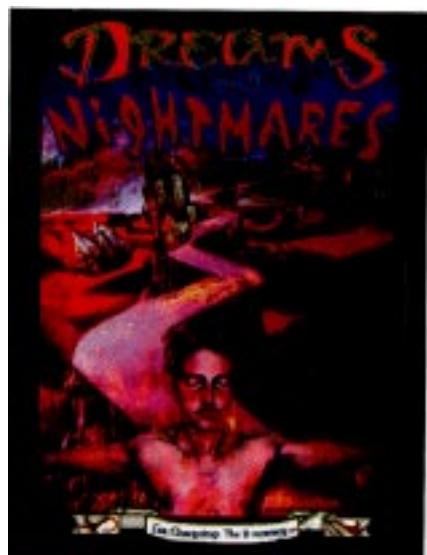
The Outer Planes sometimes capture the exaggeration and paradox of a fever dream, but for adventures into *real* unreality, you want actual dream-worlds. Dream adventures have inspired the *Dreamlands* supplement for Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu*, innumerable one-shot scenarios for other games, and even a small-press RPG, *Shuttered Dreams* (Apex Publications, 1994). Kithain, the fairy-human hybrids of White Wolf's *Changeling: The Dreaming* partake of dreamstuff, and they can enter the Dreaming realm formed by humanity's collective unconscious.

Overdue in the *Changeling* line, **Dreams and Nightmares** finally gives Storytellers a kind of Rough Guide to the Dreaming, a mythic realm that, like Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* comic, combines surreal scenery, childhood terrors, and even nutty comedy. The Dreaming embodies Glamour, the Kithain's "spell points" like Blood Pool, Rage, Quintessence, and Pathos in the other Storyteller games. Changelings in the Near Dreaming can easily cast cantrips, erase Banality, or (neat!) recall past lives. In the Far Dreaming, in a process called the Augmen, they start to transform: trolls get two feet taller, nockers start building madly, and satyrs—well, not in a family publication. Augmen grows still more drastic in the Deep Dreaming, where the Kithain become nearly unrecognizable. The Sidhe appear painfully and terrifyingly beautiful, and redcaps can swallow a human in two bites.

Rules fans should like **Dreams and Nightmares** for its rules on gathering and crafting dreamstuff, new redes, and new material about Dreamcraft and the Mists of Forgetfulness. But (surprise) I maintain that the real value here lies in its setting.

The Dreaming's various regions draw from folklore, fantasy, and the authors' own evocatively twisted imagination. Just picture the glass monarchs, Reshiam and Erikelle, in their Nautilus Tower in the drowned Empire of Regret, Arike. "Whatever you have lost is here. The friends and lovers you will not see again, the roads you will never walk, the moments you would pay much to live again—all are here. This is Arike, where dreams of what was and what could have been are born" (page 83). The Goblin Market in Fin Bheara, the Solitary Ringing Tree, the tiny hamlet of Fields Behind guarded by scarecrows, the Distant Cities that always disappear just beyond the horizon....

These moody, magical places perfectly capture the atmosphere of a dream. Weird little touches bring them alive: the Putti, feral babies; the machine-beasts, stupid creatures that scavenge machines and graft them on their bodies; the colored mannequins, who rule the world's department stores as fortress city-states; the feuding dukedoms of Quox and Mux, ruled by cartoon animals (*TOON*, anyone?); and, oddest of all, the Murphy Tunnels. "Recently, a boggan in Baltimore



discovered a trapdoor set in the floor of her Murphy bed closet . . . [She explored] a small portion of the apparently limitless system of ducts and crawlspaces behind it. When she found another door and emerged in another Murphy closet in a building a few blocks away, she became understandably disturbed" (page 103).

Yet like **Mediums, Dreams and Nightmares** presents a motley, uneven assemblage. Sometimes the writers inspire or terrify us, but elsewhere they bring forth statements like "There is nothing more unnatural than a locked door" (page 100). Really? The text hints at epic threats to the Dreaming but lacks strong story hooks to involve the PCs. As you might expect, some places read like a dull acquaintance telling you, at length, his dreams from the night before. And hey, White Wolf editors, about that Vale of Mists barrier around the Dreaming—*vale* doesn't mean "veil," it means "valley." Still—Murphy Tunnels! You gotta love it!

A side note: For fans of crossovers with other Storyteller games, **Dreams and Nightmares** connects well to *Mage* but seems curiously myopic about White Wolf's other gloomy supernaturals. For instance, I found no mention of the Sandmen, wraiths that haunt mortal dreams. As the Storyteller lines grow, such oversights are happening understandably often. To keep them under control, the World of Darkness needs an encyclopedic reference. But as one White Wolf staffer told me, "It would be a thousand pages, and no one here has time to compile it." Hey, White Wolf editors, maybe you should

get your fans working on it. For a lot of Storyteller groupies, that would be a dream come true.

Evaluation: Prices for AD&D supplements have jumped since last I looked, but *The Great Modron March* nonetheless gives great value, and the best excuse yet to tour the AD&D game's oddest setting. For characters willing to provide their own motives, the premise evokes a rare feeling of awe. You won't find awe in *Faces of Evil*, which takes the PLANESCAPE settings embodiments of cosmic corruption and only barely avoids making them tedious. On the other hand, the enchanting imagination that suffuses *Dreams and Nightmares* gives Changeling a spirit of whimsy new to the Storyteller line.

In the real world, unusual settings can move us in unexpected ways. Unlike some rewards of travel, we can experience these emotions through pure imagination. These products show how creative locations put your PCs in new situations. Their responses may surprise you—and them. Whether you're exploring a new plane or a new dream, you may find a new dimension of roleplaying fun.

Short and Sweet

The Sea Devils, by Skip Williams (TSR, \$20). Like the first "Monstrous Arcana" volume about beholders (*I, Tyrant*), **Sea Devils** thoroughly dissects the predatory marine humanoids known as sahuagin, or sea devils. Major points go to the artists and art director S. Daniele for arresting illos, stunning cartography, and inspired layout. (Love the little sahuagin stealing page numbers!) Likewise, bubbles of inventiveness surface in the text, such as the sahuagin writing system (strings of stones and shells). I found it all easy to digest, and it nicely complements the recent AD&D rules supplement *Of Ships and the Sea* (\$19.95). But jeez—birth to death, spiracle to sound chamber, I'll bet a seashell that this encyclopedic treatment tells more about sahuagin than most DMs wanted to know. (Oh, and about the bound-in poster: looks cool, but next time, perforate it!)

Sherpa, 2nd Edition, by Stefan O'Sullivan. Self-published, \$5 from Box 465, Plymouth, NH 03264; groo@groo.com.

Named for the Himalayan mountaineers, this 30-page generic RPG

system has one nice gimmick: You can play it while hiking. Character statistics and abilities (including sketchy spells or super-powers) fit on the back of a business card; core mechanics occupy a 3" x 5" reminder card; when you take a point of damage, you pick up a pebble, discarding it when you heal. Action resolution uses not dice but a digital stopwatch. Let it run the whole game; to get a random number, press the stop button and check the final digit (tenths of a second). It's cute and amusing, but that's the only new path **Sherpa** explores. Any live-action RPG could work as well. And what's the target audience? Most gamers I know would stroke out if they walked five miles, and hikers on the Appalachian Trail or Grand Tetons have plenty to occupy them already.

Dead Gods, by Monte Cook. TSR, \$29.95. This pricey but suitably mammoth 176-page AD&D PLANESCAPE adventure (for 4-6 characters, 6th-9th level) follows directly from *The Great Modron March*. At least, the first 124 pages do, as the scenario "Out of the Darkness": A deceased evil power is about to be resurrected. But he has to kill half a dozen other gods to do it, and he needs his lost artifact. The PCs accidentally learn of the danger while catching a thief of beauty, encountering a walking bird-footed castle, and spending too much time with squirmly ratatosks on the World Tree, Yggdrasil. After this slow start comes some of the PLANESCAPE campaign's very best material, like time-travel visions in the Last Spire, forays with the mad Cynosure travelling carnival, and high-stakes nastiness in a spooky fortress at "the Bottom of the Multiverse."

But these chapters stand out too boldly from their weaker surroundings. Longtime AD&Ders may enjoy a return to the Vault of the Drow; others can jettison it, along with the poor step-child companion scenario, "Into the Light," an unremarkable factional squabble in Sigil's Lower Ward. The lows in **Dead Gods** stretch as gray as Astral Space, the scene of its unsatisfying climax, but its best chapters reach divine highs. Overall? Thumbs up, especially as a continuation of *Great Modron March*.

The Last Tower: The Legacy of Raisffin, by Skip Williams. TSR, \$20. The

DRAGONLANCE®: FIFTH AGE™ game faces the daunting task of adapting dragon-sized hoards of AD&D stuff into the SAGA System. So this handsomely packaged little box not only lays out the mysteries of the formidable Tower of High Sorcery (actually seven towers, but who's counting?)—it also spends 60 pages detailing hundreds of magical rings, swords, staves, wands, medallions, and trinkets long familiar to AD&D players. I guess the game needs them, but too bad we couldn't get a conversion system and some new items. Then again, *The Last Tower* targets an audience of rank novices, with whimsical characters (Clang the dragon likes to play practical jokes) and fairytale encounters (steal a needle from the cyclops seamstress). The dirt-simple scenario leads Narrators by the hand and players by the nose as they help a secretive sorceress find the elusive Tower. Even the art looks like a coloring book. No halfway experienced AD&D player will find much interest here, but it makes a decent tutorial for a novice gamemaster.

Secrets of the Sisar Run, by Craig Robert Carey, Shane Hensley, and Pablo Hidalgo. West End Games, \$15. *Star Wars: The Roleplaying Game*, having documented virtually every aspect of the Rebellion proper, has moved into alternative campaigns. Set between the first and second movies, during the novel *Shadows of the Empire*, **Secrets of the Sisar Run** lures its smuggler PCs out to the galaxy's Periphery and gradually into Prince Xizor's Black Sun criminal syndicate. Unfortunately, the Sisar Run moves at a slow walk, without evident conflicts or long-term goals. The "Barani Conspiracy" scenario, though studded with the usual chases and firefights, depends on hidden intrigues that just end up baffling the helpless PCs. Fiddling with ancient technology, fixing a shockball game, getting rescued by the Empire (!)—some of it works, some is fun, but is this really *Star Wars*?



Freelancer Allen Varney (APVarney@aol.com) writes DRAGON Magazine's "ProFiles" column and regular articles for Duelist, InQuest, Gamer, and the trading card magazine Collect!

Re: Views

Date: Thu, 13 Jan 98 16:43:00 PDT

From: **lester smith** <lester@pensys.com>
To: DRAGON Magazine <dragon@wizards.com>

The Pocket Warrior* Game

CD-style case containing: 30-page *Pocket Warrior: Set 1* book; 32-page *Pocket Warrior: Book 1* book; and 32-page *Pocket Guide to Terrae* book

Plaid Rabbit Productions \$11.95
P.O. Box 690261, Tulsa, OK
74169-0261

Email: plaid@io.com
Website: <http://plaidrabbit.galstar.com>

Design: Greg Poehlein and
Guy McLimore

Illustrations: Gary M. Williams and
R. W. Gallaway

Ever get tired of lugging an armload of books to your fantasy roleplaying sessions? Well, that's the idea behind the *Pocket Warrior* game. Just pop this CD-style case in your pocket, and you have the makings for an admirable fantasy campaign. In a business where pretty much everyone is fighting for shelf space, equating inches of book spine with corporate visibility, Plaid Rabbit has taken the opposite tack. Its *Pocket Warrior* game is smaller than even the original digest-sized DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® rule books, smaller even than the old *Melee* and *Wizard* "microgame" boxes from Metagaming. But it's pretty surprising what all they fit into this tiny package.

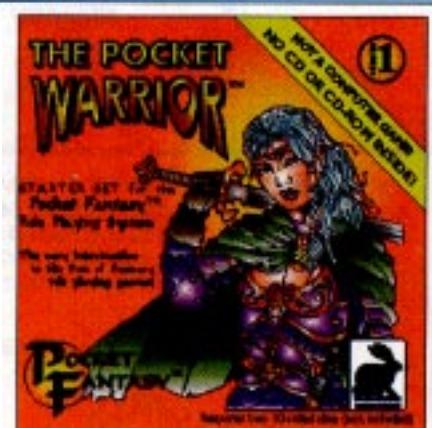
The first book in the game is laid out primarily as "cards" depicting various items, creatures, and characters for the game, two to four per page, each with its own illustration and game statistics. (The illos throughout the game set are quite good, by the way.) It also contains a few blank player-character sheets, combat-reference tables, and character-creation tables. Once you've read the game rules (in the next book), these tables are pretty much all you need for reference during actual play. The book's back cover serves as a color map depicting the primary area detailed in the campaign setting (in the final book).

The second book contains the bulk of the actual *Pocket Fantasy* game rules. It's

a respectable system, somewhat reminiscent—at least in spirit—of the old *The Fantasy Trip* game from Metagaming. (For those readers unfamiliar with that old classic, as Steve Jackson's first FRPG design, *TFT* is something of a precursor to *GURPS*. Take the *Champions* influence out of *GURPS*, and what you have left is *TFT*.) Considering that one of the authors (McLimore) is also the author of Metagaming's excellent old *GrailQuest* solo module for *TFT* that reminiscent spirit should come as no surprise.

The game rules provide for four stats (strength, health, coordination, and intelligence), plus enough skills, abilities, and disabilities to make for a wide range of characters. Racial choices are human, elf, and dwarf—not a terribly wide selection, but fitting for the campaign world. Dice used are 2d10, which gives some of the dependability of a bell curve, while retaining considerable "wahoo" randomness as well. Both skill rolls and damage rolls are made with these dice. In the case of skill rolls, you hope for the skill rating or less on the dice. For damage rolls, every weapon-natural or artificial—has a table to convert the 2d10 result to a damage number. (A dagger ranges from 1 to 10 points, while a warhammer ranges from 1 to 36, for example.) The character sheet has a handy place for recording the tables for a character's attack types. Distance and movement in combat is broken into range bands (grappling, melee, closing, missile, extended, observation, and escape), which gives some tactical feel to battles without becoming a board game. Then there are a few other bells and whistles such as a luck ability, a combat-awareness skill, and so on, to add further depth to the rules.

The third book details the default background for the game, and includes a sample adventure. I'm amazed at how much depth of thought there is to this campaign world. From the legendary history of how the various races came to be, to the more recent history of the



major continent, to the specifics of the city of Riverton itself (where the sample adventure is set), this is a setting chock full of story potential. I've seen less real background in many full-sized boxed sets on the market.

As for complaints about the product, I have only two. The first is minor, a factor of the size of the package and the amount of material it packs in. That is, the type throughout is tiny—sometimes eye-achingly so—especially the text for the skill descriptions. The second complaint is a bit more serious, as far as I'm concerned: There are no magic rules in the set. The setting description makes it clear that magic plays a strong role in how the world works, but there isn't a hint of how to represent that in the game rules. I'm sure there's a supplement planned to fill this gap, and I know there isn't much room in a CD case, but I have to admit to disappointment. Potential players should be warned that they won't be starting with mage characters in the basic set.

That aside, *The Pocket Warrior* is a remarkable product, packed full of solid game rules, a wide assortment of creatures and equipment, and a fascinating background. All that, and it still fits easily into a jacket pocket. I look forward to seeing what these guys produce for my other pockets.

Knights of the Dinner Table™

HEY GUYS, SARA IS ATTENDING THE GARY JACKSON ACADEMY OF ROLEPLAYING THIS WEEK, SO SHE WON'T BE PLAYING WITH US. I CONTACTED GAMER TEMPS AND ASKED FOR A REPLACEMENT.

HEY, NEWT! NO OFFENSE, BUT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE UP TO OUR LEVEL OF PLAY? WE TAKE OUR HACKMASTER VERY SERIOUS HERE.

YEAH, WE EXPECT EVERYONE TO PULL THEIR WEIGHT. WE DON'T WANT ANY HACK-SLACKERS OR E.P.-MOOCHERS HERE. WE HAVE A LITTLE MOTTO. "IF YOU CAN'T KEEP UP, YOU GET CUT LOOSE!"

SOUNDS LIKE MY KIND OF GROUP. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME!

KID LOOKS GREEN TO ME!!

SO LET'S GIVE A BIG WELCOME TO NEWT FORAGER!

I'M AFRAID I AGREE WITH BRIAN. TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER.

WHISPER IS A SHADOW ELF! HE'S A 14TH LEVEL MASTER THIEF-ASSASSIN!! HE ALWAYS WEARS BLACK, AND HE NEVER TALKS—HE ONLY WHISPERS!!

WHY DOES HE WHISPER? DID HE GET HIS THROAT TORN OUT BY A THROAT-GRAPPLER? I HAD THAT HAPPEN TO ONE OF MY CHARACTERS ONCE.

NO. HE WHISPERS SO DEATH CANNOT FIND HIM! HE SOLD HIS SOUL ONCE, AND WHEN DEATH CAME TO COLLECT, HE TRICKED HIM AND ESCAPED. SO DEATH HAS BEEN LOOKING FOR HIM EVER SINCE.

HMMMRFFF! BIG DEAL! I STOLE THAT IDEA FROM THE BOOK, **A TROLL FOR ALL SEASONS**!!

WHIMPERS?

KEWL!!

TOO BAD YOU BROUGHT A THIEF! MY CHARACTER KNUCKLES, KING OF THE WALL CLIMBERS, HAS THE GROUP COVERED AS FAR AS THIEVES GO.

YEAH, NOBODY RUNS A THIEF LIKE BOB CAN!! AND HE RUNS THE BEST DAMN DWARF YOU EVER SAW.

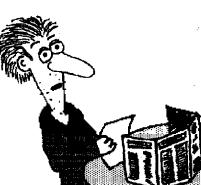
REALLY? WELL YOU KNOW, MODULE K5: TOWER OF FEAR? WELL WHISPER TOOK OUT THE GUARDIAN MUCK-GOLEM IN ROOM 4A SINGLE HANDEDLY! YOU PROBABLY HEARD ABOUT IT. IT WAS QUITE THE BUZZ AT HACKCON '94!!

WAIT A MINUTE!! I REMEMBER HEARING ABOUT THAT! DIDN'T NITRO FERGUSON RUN THAT ADVENTURE??

NITRO?

YEAH... SO?

SO? NITRO ISN'T CERTIFIED TO RUN SANCTIONED HACKMASTER.



THAT'S RIGHT, DUDE! PLAYIN' UNDER NITRO SURE DOESN'T GIVE YOU BRAGGING RIGHTS!! HE'S A BUSH-LEAGUER!! A FRINGE-GAMER!! IF YOU WORE IN YOUR TWENTY-SIDERS UNDER NITRO, THEN YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED 'REAL' HACKMASTER!!

B.A.'S A FULLY CERTIFIED HACKMASTER GM!!

YOU TRYING TO SAY I DIDN'T TAKE OUT THAT MUCK-GOLEM FAIR AND SQUARE?

WE'RE JUST SAYING IT'S DOUBTFUL THAT NITRO'S LITTLE, MUCK-GOLEM WAS UP TO SPEED!!

WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT IT? I'M SURE THE DICE ROLL JUST THE SAME AT NITRO'S TABLE AS ANY OTHER.

OH, THEY ROLL THE SAME ALL RIGHT!! BUT I'M NOT SURE THE RESULTS ARE THE SAME!

FOR CRYING OUT LOUD GUYS!! I DIDN'T ASK NEWT TO COME OVER TONIGHT SO YOU COULD INTERROGATE AND INSULT HIM!! HE CAME TO FILL AN EMPTY CHAIR! SO LET'S DROP THE THIRD DEGREE ROUTINE AND LET'S GET ON WITH TONIGHT'S ADVENTURE!!

NOW HOLD ON, B.A.! WE STILL HAVE SOME SERIOUS RESERVATIONS ABOUT THIS GUY!! ACCORDING TO THE BYLAWS, WE HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPROVE ANY NEW PLAYERS TO SIT AT THIS TABLE!!

HEY, THE GUY HAS A SERIOUS CREDIBILITY PROBLEM! NOBODY TAKES OUT A MUCK-GOLEM SINGLEHANDED!!

WELL, I DID!! I HAVE IT ALL RIGHT HERE ON MY CHARACTER SHEET!

DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE TAKING THIS TOO FAR?



IF YOU WANNA TALK EXPLOITS, LET ME TELL YA WHAT **MY** THIEF DID ONCE. YOU KNOW THE JEWEL, **STAR OF THE BLIND MAGE**, FROM **MODULE B8: TERROR AT THUNDER RIDGE**??

KNUCKLES DETECTED AND DISARMED 250 TRAPS AND SNATCHED IT FROM THE PALM OF THE **APE GOD**!! I WROTE A LETTER ABOUT IT TO **HACK JOURNAL**, BUT IT AIN'T BEEN PUBLISHED YET!

MIND YOU, THIS WAS IN A SANCTIONED GAME OF **HACKMASTER** WITH A **FULL-CERTIFIED GAMEMASTER**!!

IT WAS AWESOME!! BOB WAS REALLY HOT ON THE DICE THAT NIGHT. OF COURSE I HELD OFF THE **TEMPLE GUARDS** WITH MY **HACKMASTER +12** WHILE I COVERED BOB'S BACK!!

HACKMASTER +12!! THAT'S A MAJOR RELIC! WHO WAS THE LAME GM WHO DOLED THAT OUT?



THAT WAS NO LAME GM! THAT WAS B.A.!! AND FOR YOUR INFORMATION, OUR PARTY BREACHED THE **GATES OF VALHALLA**, AND DAVE WRESTLED **ODIN** FOR THAT SWORD!!

THAT'S RIGHT! MANO-A-MANO!! JUST ME AND HIM!!!

OH RIGHT! I BET A FEW DICE ROLLS WERE FUDGED THAT DAY! I TAKE IT YOU AND B.A. ARE PRETTY CHUMMY! (NUDGE, NUDGE, WINK, WINK) FRIENDS TAKIN' CARE OF FRIENDS. I'VE SEEN IT BEFORE!!

FUDGED?? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY? HUH??

I'M TELLIN' YA DUDE! I EARNED THAT **HACKMASTER +12** FAIR AND SQUARE, AND NOBODY IS GOING TO TELL ME DIFFERENT!!

SAVE YOUR BREATH! I'VE DECIDED I DON'T WANT TO PLAY WITH YOU GUYS. I JUST DON'T THINK THIS GAME IS UP TO MY STANDARDS!!

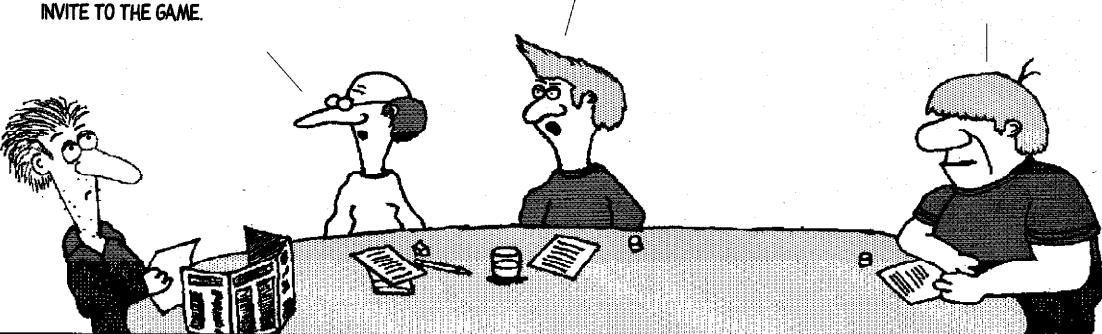


A FEW MINUTES LATER...

CAN YOU BELIEVE THAT GUY?? B.A. NO OFFENSE, BUT YOU REALLY GOT TO BE MORE DISCRIMINATING ABOUT WHO YOU INVITE TO THE GAME.

WHAT A **NUT CASE**! HE'S GONNA **DIS** ME AND TELL ME I DIDN'T GET MY SWORD ON THE SQUARE??

IT'S SAD, BUT SOME GUYS REALLY TAKE THE GAME TOO SERIOUSLY. HE OUGHTA GET SOME HELP!!





TSR PREVIEWS

NEW FOR APRIL

The Illithiad

An AD&D® MONSTROUS ARCANA™ Accessory

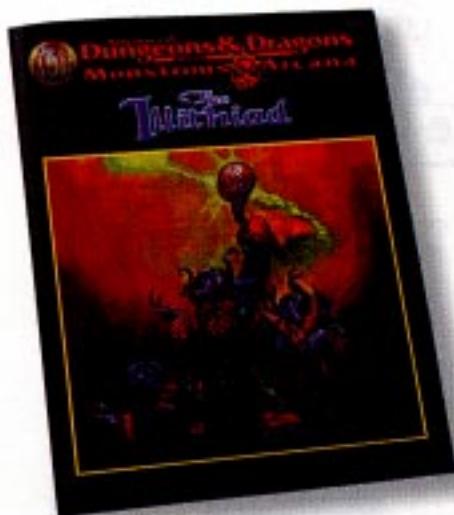
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ALTERNITY® Player's Handbook

Hardcover Rules Book

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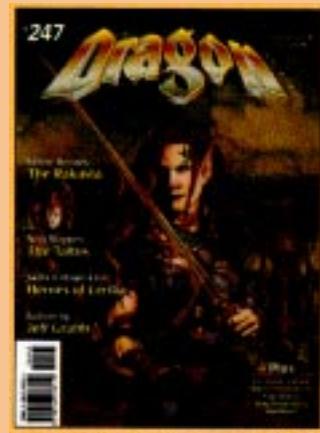
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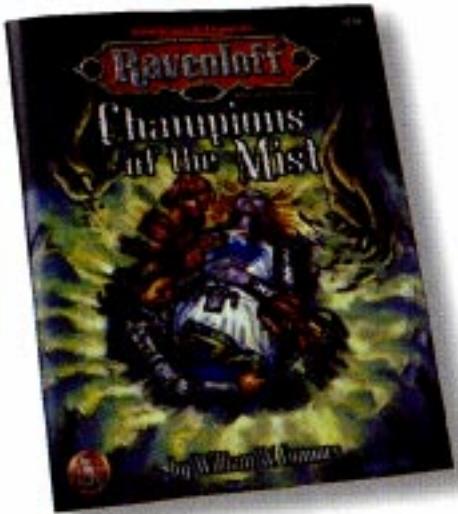
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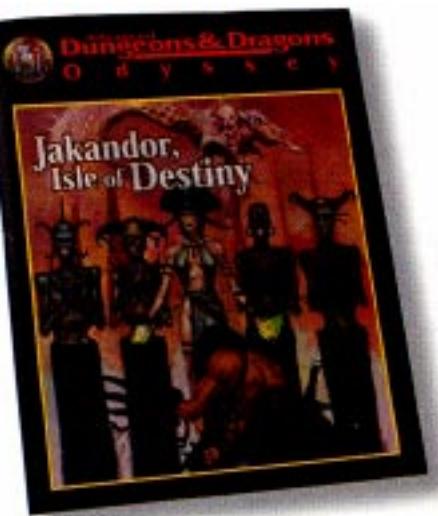
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Elaine Cunningham

Her elf novels include *Daughter of the Drow*, *Tangled Webs* (out in paperback this month), and the new *Evermeet: Island of Elves*.

"I CERTAINLY DIDN'T SET OUT to specialize in elves," says Elaine Cunningham, whose popular novels such as *Elfshadow* explore elven life in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® setting. "But recently, I think I figured out where this pattern comes from. Last summer, I wrote *Those Who Hunt* (available in April), a fantasy for Vision Books set in a world of sentient animals. The central characters are a pair of swash-buckling raccoons, and an enigmatic feline bard/bounty hunter.

As I was developing Samara, the cat character, I had a startling insight. Start with a cat; give her intelligence, weapons, magic, and art; allow her human height and stance; keep the attitude—what do you have?

The answer is, of course, an elf. Dip Samara in Nair, and the haughty little wench could walk around Evermeet without raising a winged eyebrow. So I suppose it makes sense for me to gravitate toward elves—I'm a cat person from way back. My first ambition, conceived at age four, was to become a catrancher."

For whatever reason, young Cunningham never realized her catranching dream. Growing up in New York state and New England, she took a degree in music, taught Music and History for several years, went back to grad school, and started writing when her oldest son was a baby. She made a promising debut: "Even though it's my first book and admittedly has some rough spots, I think that *Elfshadow* [1991] remains my favorite."

Cunningham grew especially fond of *Elfshadow*'s stars, Arilyn Moonblade, a half-elf with blood ties to the royal family, and the bard Danilo Thann. "I've written two sequels (*Elfsong* [1994] and *Silver Shadows* [1996]) and several short stories, and would like to continue their adventures. I really enjoy time spent with them." Arilyn and Danilo return in Cunningham's longest and most ambitious novel to date, this month's mammoth FORGOTTEN REALMS hardcover *Evermeet: Island of Elves*. In the mode of last year's *Cormyr*, by Ed Greenwood and Jeff Grubb, *Evermeet* chronicles the whole history of its land, from "The earth cooled . . ." onward. This project terrified me from the start," Cunningham confesses. "Evermeet is an almost-mythical land, and elves are a complicated and mysterious people. There are hundreds of ways such a story could be told, and none of them would

do the subject justice. I focused on several elven families, especially the Moonflower clan, from which sprung the elven queen, Amlaruil." Arilyn and Danilo provide the narrative frame: "Since Arilyn is a half-elf, she is not allowed on the island, and her royal relatives cannot acknowledge her existence. This book is Danilo's attempt to give Evermeet to her. The stories he collects for her mix history and legend, with threads running through both that culminate in a massive, devastating attack upon the island."

"Evermeet still terrifies me, but I think it turned out to be a good story. It adds a bit more color and dimension to Toril's elves, and perhaps suggests a few new ways to think about them."

As with all her books, Cunningham took pains to make *Evermeet* consistent with extant Realms campaign material. "In a shared world like the Realms, we're writing 'historical fiction.' The 'history' might be given in game accessories and other novels, but it is no less important for being fictitious. And gamers know this stuff. If you make errors, you get letters."

In August, TSR will publish Cunningham's tenth novel, the concluding volume of the Harpers series. "It's called *Thornhold*, and it's a tale of intrigue that introduces new characters, Harpers under the direction of archmage Kheiben Arunsun."

Cunningham lives in Maryland with her husband and two children. "We live in an almost-rural area, with lots of wildlife, not even including the neighborhood kids." She's currently working on "a very dark contemporary fantasy, a big, challenging book that I've been researching and planning for years."

"I have a fascination for folklore and mythology. This story takes a very old mythology and synthesizes it with certain aspects of modern culture and technology. This is absolutely the most difficult thing I've ever attempted to write. If it ends up being the best, it might just start to compensate for the aggravation!" Cunningham is branching out in other ways. "I truly enjoy writing in a shared world and plan to keep on doing it, but I'm also taking on the challenge of creating my own fantasy setting." She's keeping the details very close for now, but she does reveal one aspect of this world that should please her many fans: "Yes, there are elves in it."

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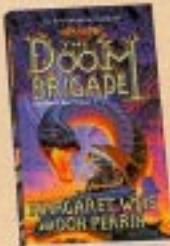
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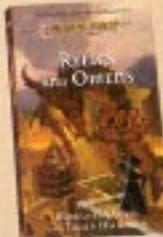
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